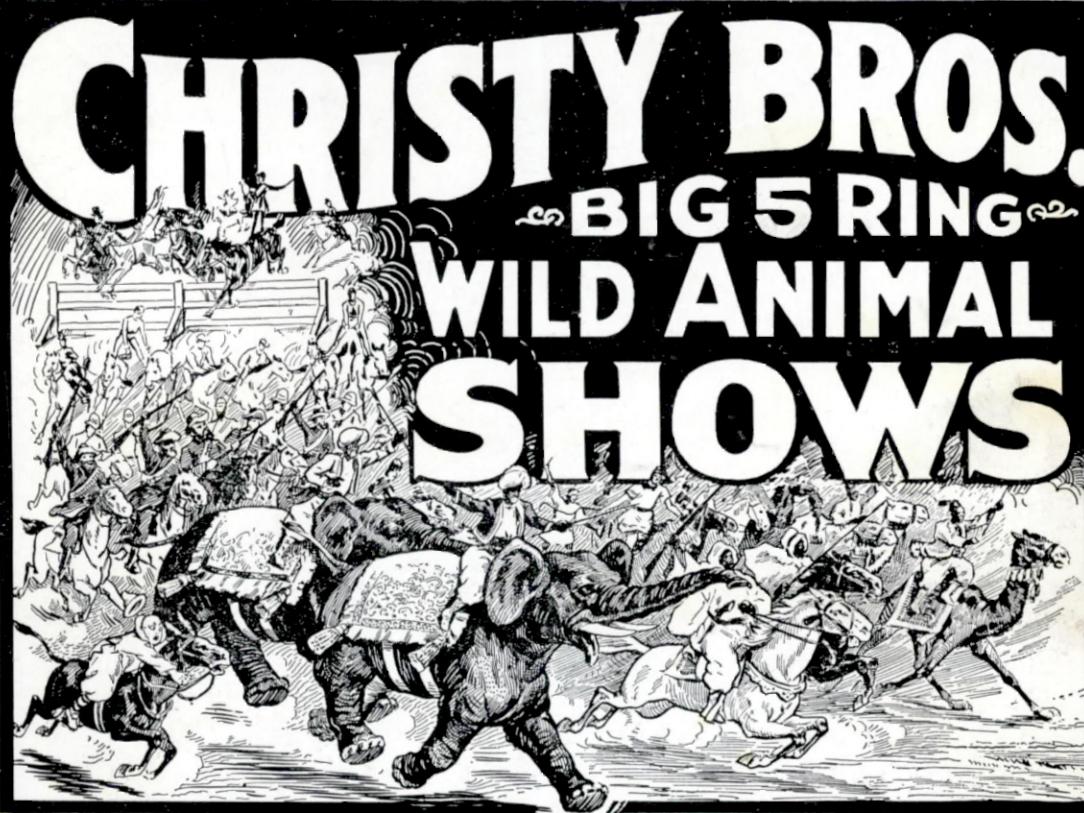


BANDWAGON

THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

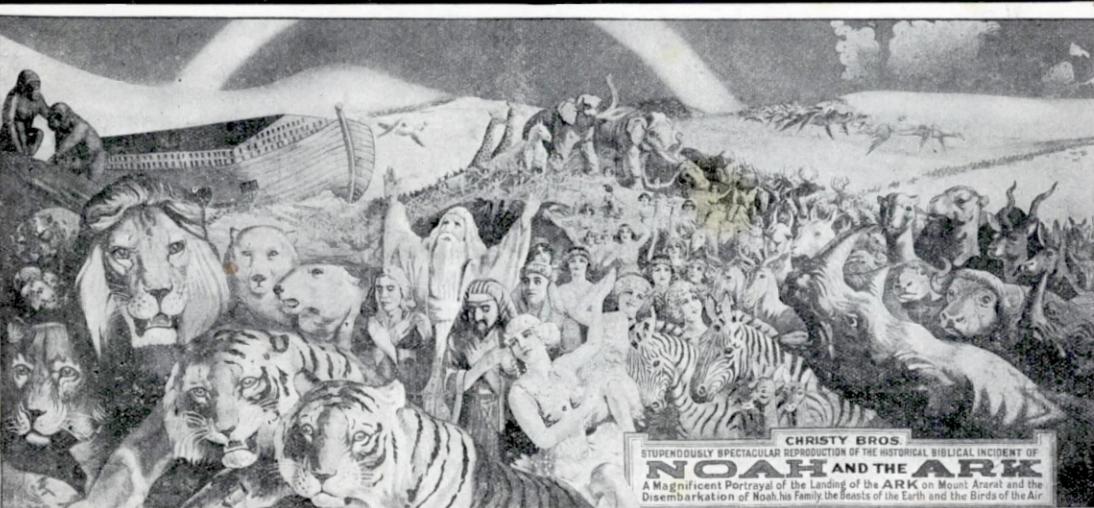


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SEPT. OCT. 1975



THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Fred D. Pfening, Jr., Editor

Joseph T. Bradbury Associate Editor

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THIS MONTH'S COVER

Our cover this issue is in honor of George Washington Christy, who died on August 7, 1975, in Houston, Texas. The illustration is from a herald used by the Christy Bros. Wild Animal Shows in the 1920s.

A native of Pottstown, Pa., G. W. Christy toured the Christy Hippodrome Shows from 1911 to 1919. The first effort was a two and three car show. The 1919 season opened on March 1 and closed on December 29, surely one of the longest seasons on record, returning to the winter quarters in Galveston, Texas. Cars were added for the 1920 season and the show continued to grow until in 1928 there were 18 cars on the show and one ahead. That season the show carried nine elephants and ten cages of animals. In 1929 the show was on 20 cars and gave a fine parade with such wagons as ASIA, AMERICA, COLUMBIA, the SWAN bandwagon and a number of other fine tableaus. The show was closed following the 1930 season. In 1925 and 1926 Christy had also operated the Lee Bros. Circus. In 1933 and 1934 he

returned the Lee title to the road on a truck show.

George W. Christy was a most successful showman, one of the few in history to become a millionaire. Coming to South Houston in 1925, it remained his quarters as well as his home. He was mayor of South Houston for 19 years, and founded the Rotary and Lions clubs there. He ran the city of South Houston with the same flamboyant flair as he did his circus.

Christy gave a number of wagons to the Circus World Museum and attended the Milwaukee parade one year. He was 86 years of age at his death.

CIRCUS MEMORIES CLOSING

Paul Horsman had advised that he is discontinuing his Circus Memories Museum in Fryeburg, Maine, and is moving to Auburn, N. Y.

At this time it is not known how extensive his new operation in Auburn will be. He is moving at the end of the year.

NEW MEMBERS

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Brooklyn Heights, New York 11201

Frank B. Michael 2221
3905 Street, Route 44
Rootstown, Ohio 44272

Samuel LaFleur 2222
1101 Market Street
Reading, Ohio 45215

William G. Lako 2223
Data Proc. Div.
DDs, Hq, Usago
APO San Francisco, California 96248

Robert Schippers, Jr. 2224
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Newton, Iowa 50208

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Lucille Lane 2226
3669 Herschel Road
College Park, Georgia 30337

Walter W. Searfoss 2227
707 East Fore Lane
Kissimmee, Florida 32741

Marlin A. Weaver 2228
3828 Pin Oak Circle
Doraville, Georgia 30340

James R. Depiro 2229
13004 Edderton Avenue
La Mirada, California 90638

GARY HOOVER & GRANDFATHER ROGER BARNES

Gary Hoover, 15 year old son of CHS member David Hoover passed away on September 17, 1975, following an extended illness.

Gary was very close to his Grandfather Roger Barnes, retired owner of the Beers-Barnes Circus. Barnes died of cardiac arrest, but family members feel the death coming one day after Gary's was linked. Barnes was 78 years old. Roger Barnes had toured a tent vaudeville show prior to merging with his brother-in-law in 1934 to form the Beers-Barnes Circus.

SEND IN CHRISTMAS ADS

It is again time to send the **BANDWAGON** your Christmas greetings ad. The Christmas issue has traditionally been the giant one of the year, and this is only possible with the support of advertising.

The advertising rates are full page \$60, half page \$30, quarter page \$15. A minimum ad is \$8. Please send your ad copy and payment to the editor by November 20, 1975.

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by Jill Freedman

This book "CIRCUS DAYS" is a behind-the-scenes photo-portrait of the Beatty-Cole Circus, the largest tented circus in America. Jill Freedman, a remarkable photojournalist, has superbly captured the illusions and the realities of circus life in this 9' by 12' 126 page, profusely illustrated book. A CLOTH BOUND COPY \$12.95 OR PAPER BOUND COPY \$6.95 POSTPAID.

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MY FATHER OWNED A CIRCUS
by Robert Gollmar
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SEASON OF 1922

By Joseph T. Bradbury

This is the story of the 1922 Howe's Great London Circus, a 15 car show, owned by Michael E. "Mike" Golden, Milton "Milt" Runkle, and Charles J. Adams. Although the name of Howe in some variation was used in circus titles as late as 1952, the full and traditional moniker of "Howe's Great London" was last used on a major circus in 1922.

The name of Howe is prominent in American circus history. The Sturtevant files list a total of five different circus owners by that name and a Howe's circus goes back to the 1820's.

The title of Howe's Great London Circus was first used in 1871 and remained in continuous usage until 1887 with a number of different operators being involved.

In 1902 the old title was revived and placed on a circus owned by Bill and Frank Smith for two seasons. From 1908 through 1916 Jerry Mugivan and Bert Bowers used the title on

their railroad circus. Variations through the years they had the title saw it as Howe's Great London Show, later Shows, and finally Circus. The name was idle in 1917 but in 1918 it appeared on a two car circus owned by Chester Monaghan and Herbert Duval. Mugivan and Bowers put it into use again in 1920, and in 1921 one of the four circuses owned by this famous duo, now in partnership with Edward Ballard, was titled Howe's Great London Circus and Van Amburg's Trained Wild Animals.

The Howe title and the physical equipment of the 1922 circus came by different routes. To get the picture of the physical equipment you must go back to the winter of 1920-21 when W. F. "Doc" Palmer formed a partnership with John T. Backman and Al Tinsch, who had operated a 2 car show in 1920 called Backman-Tinsch Circus, to organize a new 10 car, flat car type, show which would take to the road in 1921 under the title of Palmer Bros. Circus.

Most of the equipment used to frame the new show was purchased at the William P. Hall farm in Lancaster, Mo. during the winter of 1920-21. This equipment had been stored at the farm and had been on either the 15 car Howe's Great London Circus which Messers

Mugivan, Bowers, and Ballard had sent there for the winter or the 20 car Yankee Robinson Circus which had recently been purchased by the trio and was also at the Hall Farm.

Palmer and his partners got from the 1920 Yankee Robinson show the advance car, elephant car, a former Barnum & Bailey carved tableau-den, cages, and baggage wagons. From the 1920 Howes show came a very fine steam calliope, a ticket wagon, and other equipment.

The new 10 car Palmer Bros. Circus opened in its quarters town of San Antonio, Texas, March 28, 1921 and although it did make a full route it was plagued with financial and other difficulties most of the time. In addition to funds owed to Mugivan, a sizeable sum was also owed to William P. Hall and C. A. Wortham. A train wreck near Hot Springs, S. D. on June 10 created problems and a blow-down at Rapid City, S. D. added to the miseries of the new show. These trying days are recounted in Part 2 of "Circus World Museum Presents The Papers of William P. Hall" by

Clown band atop a bear cage in Howes Great London Circus street parade, season of 1922. Chet Slusser Collection.



Tom Parkinson in the March-April 1973 Bandwagon. The Palmer show finally had to call it a season at Palo Alto, Calif. on Nov. 9 and went into quarters at the old U. S. Army Remount Station just south of the city. It was heavily in debt and Palmer was ready to give it up and return to his old sideshow days.

Shortly after the show arrived in Palo Alto, Mike Golden and Milt Runkle began negotiations for the purchase of the show. It was a difficult task because of the indebtedness but they were successful and purchased the equipment of the show on December 20, 1921. Details of the sale are not known to the author.

The Dec. 31, 1921 Billboard broke the news in an article with headlines, "Palmer Bros. Animal Circus Sold to Golden and Runkle". The story said that after about two months of negotiations the duo purchased the show and "because of the nature of the transaction necessitating the settlement of numerous claims against the show, details of the pending purchase have been shrouded in the deepest secrecy." It was stated that none of the former show personnel would be with it and that it would be enlarged from 10 to 15 cars. Golden was quoted as follows,

"New blood and an entirely new policy will mark our advent into the circus world. We intend to put on a show that will be a credit to the show world and we are as rapidly as possible surrounding ourselves with real oldtime showfolks who know their business and are troupers in every sense of the word. As yet we have not selected a title for the show but this will be announced at an early date thru the columns of The Billboard along with other important announcements relative to the show and its new policies." Other notes in the article said that Jim Babcock, well known car and wagon builder, had been hired and was in charge of the winterquarters work and that more animals and animal acts would be added. The article concluded by stating that the show had nice quarters in the old U. S. Army Remount station near Palo Alto and that the weather of late had been fine.

Golden and Runkle went 50-50 on their partnership to purchase and operate the new show. Lately they had been partners in the Allied War Trophy Exhibition which had been on tour throughout the United States. Both men had wide experience in the circus field. Golden, especially had put in many years under the white tops. He had been with Adam Forepaugh and was with Sells Bros. on its 1891 tour of Australia. Also through the years he had seen service with McMahan, Miles Orton, John Robinson, Huntington, and Montgomery Queen. His latest circus experience had been with Sells-Flotto.

Golden and Runkle soon took in a third partner, Charles J. Adams. The percentage now held by the trio is not known to the author but Gordon Jones, of Sunland, Calif. who was on the show and provided much information about it, says that Golden was the top man with a controlling interest. Jones describes Adams as a high class person who had once owned a gambling house in San Francisco. While on the road he looked after the sideshow and kept his eye on the joints. Runkle served as treasurer and Golden was in overall charge of activities.

In the meantime a significant event had



Cage wagon containing birds and small animals pulled by six pony hitch in Howe's Great London Circus street parade, 1922. Chet Slusser Collection.

taken place elsewhere which would have a bearing on the title to be used on the Golden-Runkle-Adams show. The new American Circus Corporation (Mugivan, Bowers, Ballard) secured a five year lease of the Gollmar Bros. title and decided to use it in 1922 on the show that in 1921 had been called Howe's Great London Circus and Van Amburg's Trained Wild Animals. Since the lengthy Howe's moniker was not to be used by the ACC a deal was made by Golden and his associates to use the title. Also they purchased all printed matter on hand which included billing paper, tickets, even letterheads. The Howe paper on the shelves of the Riverside Printing Co. was also purchased. Gordon Jones said Golden got the title on a lease agreement. For how long is not known but it was used only in 1922 although Golden continued to operate the show until it was sold in 1924.

Although the Van Amburg name was also splashed all over the paper and other advertising matter Golden used only the Howes

This former Barnum & Bailey tableau wagon shown here on the Yankee Robinson Circus about 1918 was the most elaborately carved wagon on Howes Great London in 1922. McClintock Collection.

Great London portion in the lettering of the equipment.

The January 21, 1922 Billboard which told of the title to be used by Golden, Runkle, and Adams, said that Golden himself was now in Chicago, probably purchasing new wardrobe, and then would go to Peru, Indiana to buy some additional equipment, however no specifics were given.

Golden was true to his word when in the Billboard interview at time of the show's purchase he promised that he and his partners would surround themselves with real oldtime showfolks who know their business. He succeeded in hiring a number of prominent Al G. Barnes personnel to work for Howes Great London. Frank A. Cassidy, formerly Barnes contracting press agent, was signed on as general agent; J. C. (Dusty) Rhodes, four seasons 24 hr. man with Barnes, would be Howe's contracting agent; John C. Fowler, formerly Barnes sideshow manager, was hired for the same position; Babe Collins, asst. to George Davis on the Barnes candy stands in 1921, was selected to be in charge of the Howes stands; Charles Bouleware, ex-Barnes executive, came on to be the road manager of Howes Great London; and Paul Barton who was the Barnes trainmaster the previous season was hired for the same position with Howes.

The Jan. 28, 1922 Billboard carried a goodly amount of information about activities at the Howe's quarters. It said that Runkle and Bouleware were busy at the quarters and that

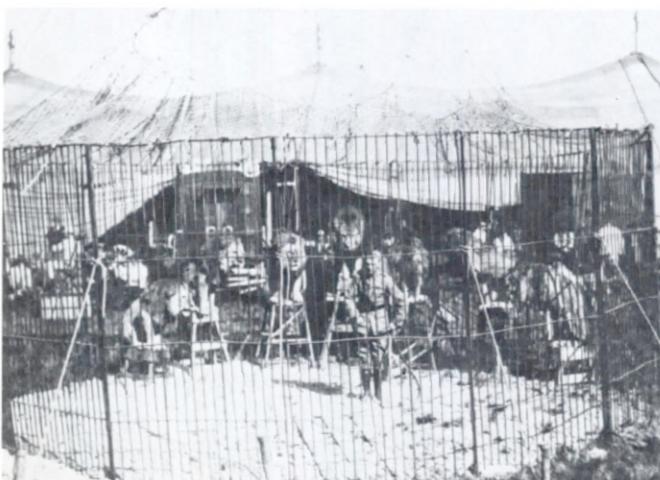


Golden and Frank A. Cassidy, general agent, had been visiting Eastern points on business. Entire new wardrobe for the planned elaborate spec had arrived from Chicago and new animals and rail equipment were on hand. Some new personnel mentioned were Mark Smith, signed on as boss canvasman, with Frank Miller as his assistant; Andy Haley would be in charge of the sideshow canvas; Jim Lloyd would be the boss hostler and Charlie Fulton, in charge of ring stock, was working them every day. It was also mentioned that the baggage stock was in pasture owned by the Lucky Baldwin estate.

The primary task during the early months of 1922 was the enlargement of the show from 10 to 15 cars, and first order of business was to secure the additional railway equipment. Palmer Bros. had travelled on 1 advance, 2 stocks, 4 flats, and 3 coaches. Five cars were purchased which consisted of 1 stock, 3 flats, and 1 coach. According to information in The Billboard Mr. Adams obtained a handsome 70 ft. sleeper from the Pullman shops in Richmond, Calif. and Mr. Golden purchased 3 flat cars in the Los Angeles area. No source was given for the flats but conceivably they could have come from a carnival or possibly from the Al G. Barnes Circus. Since Barnes had converted to the new 70 ft. all steel Mt. Vernon built flat cars that show would have had cars available for sale. It was not mentioned where the additional stock car came from. The 1922 Howes train moved on one advance, 3 stocks, 7 flats, and 4 coaches. Color scheme of the train is not known to the author. All of the flats were the old style 60 ft. wooden cars which were still in use on most rail shows at the time although many of the larger circuses were rapidly obtaining the new longer steel flats. Sells-Floto had just purchased 21 all steel Keith built cars and would roll with them for the first time in 1922.

Approximately 12 wagons, baggage, cages, and tableaux were added to the Howe show and it is believed all were constructed in the

Jules Jacot (Jerry Irwin) in steel arena with 7 lions on lot of Howes Great London, season of 1922. Arena was set up outside the big top for filming of the movie, "Someone to Love" in the San Francisco area. Gordon Jones Collection.



Milt Runkle (center), Tom Ryan (right) and unidentified man on Howes Great London lot in 1922. Ticket wagon is in background. Gordon Jones Collection.

show's Palo Alto quarters. Parade type wagons known to have come with the Palmer property included a heavily carved former Barnum & Bailey tabden which had later seen service on the Yankee Robinson Circus, (see photo); a steam calliope which had been on the 1920 Howes Great London Show, and a 1920 Howes ticket wagon which could possibly have been used in the parade, although it is not known for certain whether Palmer did so. It was felt that additional parade type wagons were needed so the Howe's shops built two. One was a rather plain, box type wagon, without carvings, and had large "Cinderella In Jungleland", title of the 1922 spec, lettering on the sides. The other was also a rather plain box type wagon with three diamond shaped mirrors on each side.

Photos indicate Palmer Bros. had at least 2 cross cages and possibly 2 or 3 larger cages. The 1922 Howe show had about 8 cages (that was the number on an inventory of property made later in 1924) but we don't have an exact

breakdown on the type. Photos show that there were at least 2 cross cages in 1922 plus another larger den all of which came from Palmer. Several cages, probably 4 or 5, were built in quarters to house the show's wild animal acts. These were plain wagons devoid of carvings or other solid type decorations but were attractively painted and were entirely adequate for a show of this size. The remainder of the wagons built during the winter were strictly for baggage use.

Approximately 30 pieces of rolling stock were loaded on the 7 flat cars when the season began. There is no evidence that the show carried any kind of motor equipment.

In March, 16 additional baggage horses were purchased, 8 blacks, and 8 dapples which gave the show a total of approximately 40 head.

No inventory of lead or ring stock in 1922 is available but it is believed to have been approximately the same as an inventory made in 1924 which listed 15 trained horses (menage), 2 saddle horses, 1 trained riding lion horse, 13 ponies, 2 mules, and 3 camels.

The Feb. 25, 1922 Billboard said that the Howe show had recently bought a group of performing wild animals from the Sheesley Carnival which included 5 male lions, 2 female lions, 4 leopards, 3 pumas, and 5 bears, all of which were trained to work. This group of animals plus monkeys, birds, dogs, and remainder of the Palmer menagerie gave the 1922 Howes Great London Show a very strong lineup of menagerie animals for a 15 car show.

The elephant herd consisted of Rubber and Rosie, both Asiatic females, which had been on the 1921 Palmer Bros. Circus. Rosie had been purchased by Palmer from William P. Hall and Rubber had come by way of the 1920 Yankee Robinson Circus. She was a real old timer and dated back to Sells Brothers.

No details are available on the Howes canvas spread but in all probability it was the same that was used in 1923, consisting of a 120 ft. round with three 40's big top; menagerie top, 70 ft. round with three 30's; a sideshow 60

Steam calliope with 4 horse hitch bringing up rear of Howes Great London Circus street parade in 1922. Gordon Jones Collection.





Howes Great London 9 piece sideshow band in front of the 3 mirror bandwagon on lot, season of 1922. This wagon was built by the show's shop forces at the Palo Alto,

ft. round with two 30's; dressing room, horse tent, and cookhouse.

A daily street parade was a feature of the Howes Great London Circus. A lack of photographic coverage makes it difficult to give a lineup with very much accuracy, however from the few photos plus knowledge of wagons the show had a fairly reasonable listing can be attempted. The No. 1 band rode the newly built "Cinderella in Jungleland" tab; the sideshow band used the newly built three diamond mirror wagon, and the clown band rode atop a bear cage. It is not known who rode the old Barnum & Bailey tableau but no doubt costumed performers as the big show band probably didn't split into two sections for parade purposes. According to The Billboard all cages in the parade were open and it can be assumed all made the daily march. The steam calliope which brought up the rear was a beautiful wagon which went back at least to the 1907 Great Van Amburg Show which was owned by Mugivan and Bowers. The detailed history of this wagon plus a good sideview photo appears on page 21 of the Nov.-Dec. 1969 Bandwagon. The Billboard mentioned that a parade feature was a beautiful golden slipper mounted on a low flat wagon surrounded by pretty girls. It also said the show had 2 calliopes but no evidence can be found that an air calliope was carried. None was there in 1923 and 1924.

Nearly every issue of The Billboard in the late winter and early spring carried some mention of the activities of the new Howe show. The Feb. 25, 1922 issue stated that Jules

This herald was designed and used by the Mugivan-Bowers-Ballard owned Howes Great London Circus and Van Amburg's Trained Wild Animals in 1921 but was also used on the 1922 version of the show. When Golden, Runkle, and Adams obtained the title they also purchased all excess printed material, such as this herald, still in the hands of the earlier show and on the shelves of the Riverside Printing Co. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.



Calif. quarters during the winter of 1921-22. It is currently at the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wis. Gordon Jones Collection.

Howes Great London blowdown at Graceville, Minn., Aug. 24, 1922. Felled big top is in foreground. Gordon Jones Collection.

**HOWE'S LONDON
GREAT CIRCUS
VAN AMBURG'S TRAINED WILD ANIMALS**

A PERMANENT UNION OF THE AMUSEMENT GIANTS OF THE OLD AND NEW WORLD

2 ZOOS IN ONE

EARTH'S MIGHTIEST CONSOLIDATION OF TRAINED WILD ANIMAL SHOWS

1000 - PEOPLE - 1000 - 600 - HORSES - 600
400 - JUNGLE BEASTS - 400
4 RAILROAD TRAINS OF DOUBLE LENGTH CARS
11 ACRES OF CANVAS

3 - RINGS - 3
2 - STAGES - 2
2 STEEL ARENAS 2
RACING HIPPODROME
AERIAL - ACROBATIC,
GYMNASTIC,
WIRE EQUILIBRISTIC,
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384 - FEATURE ARENIC STARS - 384

TWO PERFORMANCES DAILY - AFTERNOON AND NIGHT
DOORS OPEN AT 1 AND 7 O'CLOCK P.M. PERFORMANCE COMMENCES ONE HOUR LATER
PARADE DAILY AT 11 A.M.

Jacot had been engaged to work the wild animal displays in the performance and that he would be in overall charge of the menagerie. Additional notes said that Cinderella in Jungleland would be the title of the new spec and that J. C. (Dusty) Rhodes, contracting agent was hitting the road this week, also that the advance car had been completely remodeled and was now ready for the road. "Wild Horse" Mike Brahn had arrived with 22 head of Wild West and menage stock, Paul Barton had his force working on the rail cars, Charles Fulton has the menage horses and ponies in opening day shape, and Ed Casteel has the dogs, monkeys, and goats ready. More than 100 men and women were said to now be in quarters and opening date for the show will be March 23.

The March 18, 1922 Billboard gave the first real details on the Howes performance and said that no circus type acts were to be carried but that the performance would be given exclusively by trained animals. The opening spec would be quite elaborate with special music, a chorus, and several soloists. A specially advertised feature of the menagerie would be Mizpah, "only sacred camel ever brought to America" and the management claimed the elephant herd would soon be enlarged by 6 small animals from Singapore. (The elephants never arrived). Mons. Jules Jacot would work a large group of lions, there would be riding lions, "balloon" lions, and a total of half a dozen mixed animal groups. The article concluded by stating that John Randolph Fowler, the sideshow manager, had lined up some good attractings including Grace Gilbert, bearded lady, and Col. Ludwig.

Gordon Jones, who was on the show, and furnished considerable information and photos, says that "Mons. Jules Jacot's real name was Jerry Irwin and when he was working animal acts for Yankee Robinson was billed as Jerry Jacobs. Later he took the professional name of Jules Jacot and was in charge of animals at Universal Studios when hired by Golden. Jacot was later with a number of circuses, up until the 1930's.

The 1922 season was at last on hand.



Howes Great London sideshow bannerline and bally platform, season of 1922. Gordon Jones Collection.

Railroad circuses (flat car type) on the road would include Ringling-Barnum, Sells-Floto, Hagenbeck-Wallace, John Robinson, Gollmar Bros., Al G. Barnes, Walter L. Main, Sparks, Gentry Bros., Christy Bros., Patterson's, Rhoda Royal, Campbell-Bailey-Hutchinson; and Howes Great London. All shows paraded with exception of Ringling-Barnum. Railroad, gilly or tunnel type, shows included M. L. Clark & Sons (owned by Floyd and Howard King), Cole Bros., owned by E. H. Jones, and Wheeler Bros. Fully a dozen or more overland shows, most of them travelling with a combination of wagons and a few trucks, were also out.

Howes Great London opened the season at Redwood City, Calif. Thursday, March 23, 1922, then played Hayward, San Mateo, and was at South San Francisco on March 26. The Billboard sent a reporter to cover the new show and his report was carried in the April 1, 1922 issue.

"Great Welcome for Howes Great London Circus in Frisco. Crowds Eclipse Wildest Expectations of Management — highly pleasing performance staged by new show under old title." The article noted that the show has been playing to capacity business since opening and that courtesy and consideration for the show's patrons are in evidence everywhere. The reporter said that the show was practically rebuilt and the performance put together in 60 days. The feature act in the program is presented by Mons. Jules Jacot and his group of 12 lions. The detailed account of the performance was as follows.

"Opening with a gorgeous spectacle, 'Cinderella in Jungeland' the program never lags for a moment. A huge golden slipper is carried into the arena with a group of a dozen pretty girls as fairies in attendance. At the proper moment Cinderella, portrayed by Miss Dot Posty, rises from the slipper to plead for the appearance of her Prince Charming in the person of Don Smith. Several solos and choruses and an Oriental dance by June Feunitti make the spectacle unusually attractive. The costumes are all bright and new and the music is particularly snappy. Aside from the spectacle the most elaborate feature is the menage act, in which a wonderfully trained score of horses appear with these riders, Bernice Brown, Lorraine Bouleware, Alice Brahm, Babe Lloyd, Marie Baudet, Hazel



Howes Great London sidewalled menagerie, season of 1922. Concession stand is in foreground with cages in back. Gordon Jones Collection.

Bartlett, Billie Burton, Dot Smith, Edna Holmes, Hazel Wise, Pearl Richardson, Marie Nelson, and Messrs. Joe Feunitti, J. A. Casteel, and Charles Fulton. The dancing horses won much applause. "Red" McKay and his camel and elephant was working in mid season form. He was assisted by Hazel Bartlett. Billie Burton's bear act was a winner from the start. The ponies and ring stock showed that they were in capable hands as Charles Fulton presented these acts in a faultless manner. J. A. Casteel offered the classiest dog act that has been seen in this section for years. He is a finished artist dressing the part in excellent taste. Lorraine and her dogs made a hit as did Dot Smith's goat act. A group of lionesses handled by Ruth Irwin (Mrs. Jacot) provided a series of thrills and she was forced to take 3 bows. A mixed group of leopards and pumas was presented by Lurena Leclair in sensational style and the balloon lion handled by Babe Lloyd furnished a thrilling end to the program. (Note, the reviewer, who had stated that Jules Jacot's lion act was the feature attraction earlier didn't indicate just where during the performance it was presented but probably just after the opening spec.)

"Kenneth Waite with 17 hard working clowns kept the audience in excellent humor at all times and offered a number of novelties. Waite as principal producing clown is maintaining his invaluable reputation of past years and is one of the big features of the new show. Among his helpers are Chester Sherman, track worker, and Chi Alexander, clown cop.

"Wild Horse Mike" Brahm and his congress of rough riding cowboys and cowgirls furnished a concert that drew a most satisfactory audience and sent it home delighted.

"A personal hit was made during the circus proper by Miss Bernice Brown, the "prima donna of the big top", in a charming dove number. Twenty-four accomplished musicians (number exaggerated) under the leadership of O. A. Gilson provided a musical program that showed careful selection and remarkable talent.

"The staff includes: M. E. Golden, Charles J. Adams, M. R. Runkle, owners; Charles T. Bouleware, manager Milt Runkle, treasurer; D. G. Evans, secretary; R. L. Goodenough, auditor; James Babcock, supt.; Gus Schwab, legal adjuster; Frank Millard, boss canvasman; Joe Lloyd, boss hostler with Rattlesnake Bill Barren as assistant; Bennie Sturgeon, sideshow canvas; Paul Barton, trainmaster; G. W. Lynch, steward; Charles Fulton, ring stock; "Spot" Meyers, purchasing

agent; James Frank, press agent; (back with show); C. S. Giles, supt. of tickets; Edward Stewart, front door; Mrs. Tessie Crane "Mother" Howard, wardrobe; Ed Steiger, lights; Frank A. Cassidy, general agent and railroad contractor; J. C. (Dusty) Rhodes, local contractor; Karl Knutson and James Saunders, special agents; Babe Collins, supt. privileges; N. W. McKay, supt. elephants; A Van Buhre, manager adv. car No. 2; Eddie Bell, announcer.

"Manager Bouleware personally directs the performance and Jack Casteel is asst. equestrian director."

The review ended by stating that the advance car is working two weeks ahead.

Gordon Jones recalls a few more acts not specifically covered in the Billboard review. Several numbers were added later in the season. There were two pony drills with about 6 animals in each. Kathryn Thompson worked a high school horse act as well as a pony and dog with a revolving table. The show also had a bucking mule act. Jones said that Jerry Irwin, billed as Jules Jacot, had one of the wildest lion acts he had ever seen. It was filled with action. There were usually 10 to 12 lions in the arena, indicating that additional animals other than those acquired from the Sheesley Carnival had been obtained, but only 7 were being worked when the photo printed here was taken.

Jones, a trick rider and roper himself, came to the show with Mike Brahm. He recalls the wild west aftershow, headed by Mike and Alice Brahm, was a fine one. In it was Mike Potts, one of the best trick riders in the business, and Jack Lindell, who had his bucking horse there, became one of the best horse trainers in the motion picture industry. Lindell later trained the famous Hal Roach movie horse, Rex Jones, who also worked a bucking mule and helped with the pony drill, said that Brahm owned the bucking horses, high school horses, gray mule, and pinto mares.

One talented youngster, Jones remembers, was Little Virginia Falkendorf, who had a chariot act, and was prominent in the spec and other numbers in the performance.

Jones says the Howes Great London Circus was very strong on grit in 1922. The sideshow rackets, presumably shell game and three card monte, known as "nuts" and "Broads" in the

parleyne of the day, were run by a fellow known as "The West Side Kid".

The April 8, 1922 Billboard said that the new show had gotten off to a fine start. A large floral horseshoe was presented to the show at the opening by the City of Palo Alto and occupied a prominent position at the front door for the first four days of the season. The note which accompanied the floral piece read, "The undersigned residents and business men of Palo Alto, Calif. herewith wish you all success and prosperity in the conduct of your show business during the coming season. We are glad you wintered in Palo Alto and trust that you will be back with us next fall. Our best wishes go with you." The Howe's circus also got great publicity when local movie houses began showing news weeklies issued by Pathé, Selznick, Cineograph, and Fox which featured scenes taken of the circus in winter quarters just prior to the season's opener.

Golden and his partners planned to make an extensive tour of California and some 65 dates were scheduled. Naturally, opposition could be expected from the very popular 30 car Al G. Barnes Circus which wintered in the Los Angeles area and had been a great favorite with the natives for a dozen years. The Barnes show, as did Howe's, featured a wild animal performance format. However, by careful routing the Howe show avoided all but 9 stands with Barnes opposition, although the latter was in California for 54 days. In 1921 Mugivan, Bowers, and Ballard had sent their 25 car Howes Great London Circus to California in the early spring with the express intent of battling Al G. Barnes and of the 28 stands played in the state, 18 of them were in opposition to Barnes. Tradition has long held that Barnes won the battle for California and Mugivan and his partners were so impressed at the tremendous popularity and drawing power of their adversary that from then on they made constant overtures to purchase it, finally succeeding in January 1929. However, Golden with only a 15 car Howe's show in 1922, had no desire to battle old Al G. and felt they had rather switch, if necessary, their route around so as to avoid the larger show rather than to fight it.

Howe's was first into the Bay Area with its

Howes Great London wild west riders on pintos, season of 1922. Left to right are Jack Lindell, Earl Stull, Gordon Jones, Alice Brahm, and Mike Brahm. Gordon Jones Collection.



early dates but at all other stands in which it was in opposition with Barnes the latter was in first. Barnes had opened March 7 at Redlands, Calif., two weeks earlier than Howes, and had the jump over the smaller show at most places.

Moving south from the Frisco area, Howes, headed down the state toward the Los Angeles suburbs. The April 29, 1922 Billboard in commenting on the stands so far said that Howe's had completed a successful tour of Southern California and after it's date at Alhambra, April 15, had headed northward again. The report said the show was running smoothly and that several turnaways had been recorded. A big drawing card was the sideshow. While in Glendale, April 7, many showfolk from Los Angeles visited and in Glendale it was a school holiday with the local high school's "High Jinks Day". Some 500 students in all kinds of grotesque costumes followed behind the street parade making this particular march one of the most notable of the season.

At Anaheim, April 10, Howe's got it's first taste of what it was like following Al G. Barnes which had played the city on March 15. Howe's was in Bakersfield, April 17, following Barnes which had played March 27. What the result in business was for those stands I have no information, however, reports seem to indicate the Howe show was doing okay generally.

In the meantime news had been released that the Howe's Great London Circus was to appear in a film and that a contract had been signed with Clark Thomas, general manager of the Thomas H. Ince Company. The circus was to provide background setting for the movie to be filmed entitled, "Someone to Love" starring Madge Bellamy and directed by John Ray. The movie company joined at San Jose on May 3 and remained for three weeks. They brought the highly educated Selig elephant which was used throughout the screen story and also to augment the daily street parade. Practically all operations of the circus were filmed, including the performance and street parade. The script called for a blowdown so while in the Oakland area, May 4-7, they "blew" down the sideshow one day, the menagerie the next, and for the grand scene of the big top going down some 700 extras from San Francisco were brought over and after the night show the company filmed the big top blowing down with the aid of two fire companies from the City of Oakland. One day the big top was sidewalled and the entire performance was filmed. The contract with Ince provided a nice revenue for the show

plus a lot of excitement for the troupers. What success the film had when it was later shown in movie houses throughout the land is not known to the author. (What a valuable bit of historical material it would be if an old print of this film could be located.)

Despite the activity of filming the movie, the daily business of the circus went on. Al G. Barnes had previously been in the Bay Area, playing Oakland April 14-16 and San Francisco April 18-23.

Leaving Oakland Howes moved to Vallejo for a stand, May 8, a town Barnes had made back on April 24. Next the show headed northward for it's final three weeks in the state. It was at Santa Rosa, May 14, the last of the Barnes opposition towns, that show having been in on April 25. Other stands with Barnes opposition not mentioned elsewhere were as follows.

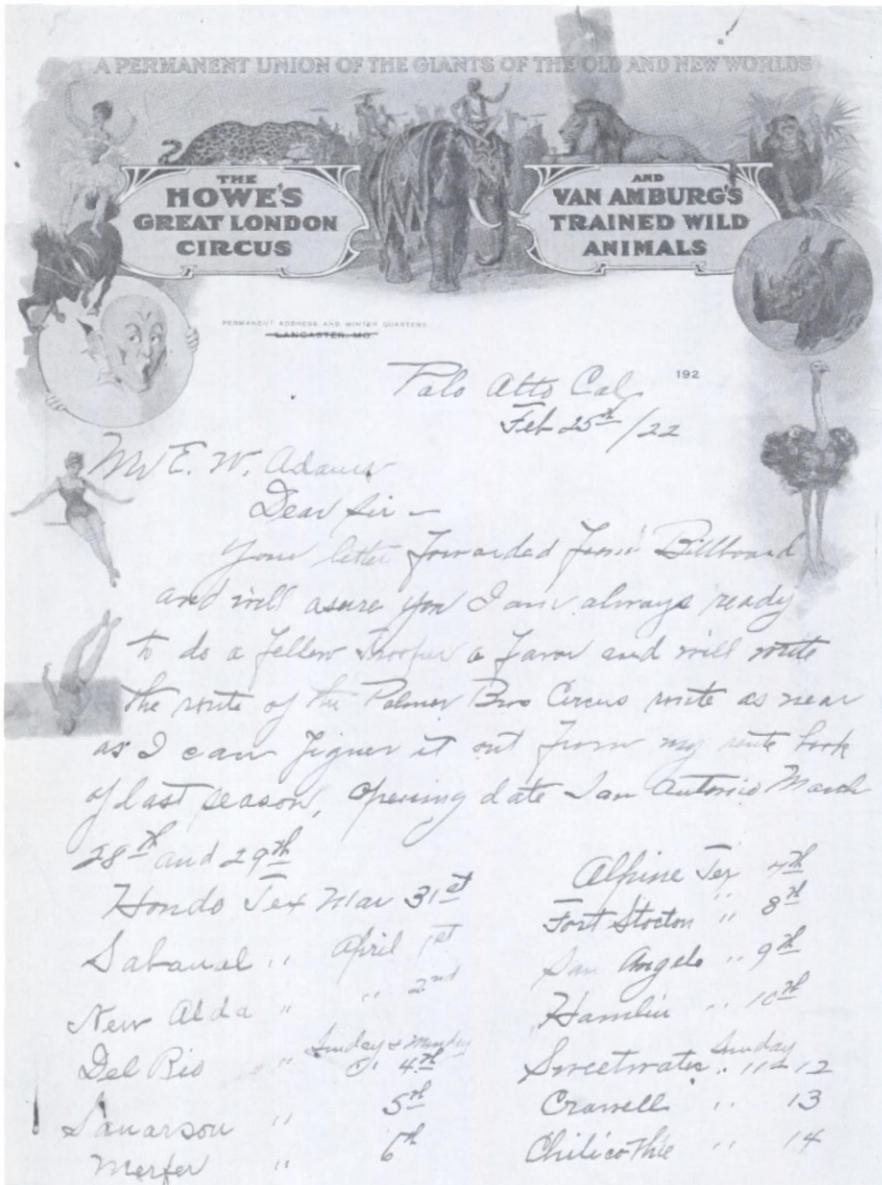
Stand	Barnes Date	Howes Date
Hanford	April 1	April 20
Fresno	April 3	April 22
Modesto	April 5	April 26
Stockton	April 7	April 27

The May 20, 1922 Billboard noted that Frank Millard, Howe's big top boss canvasman had a crew of 30 and that "Jersey" was the kid worker. Other items said that three lion cubs were born in Stockton, Joe Brown was doing well with his wrestling bear act, and Fritz Brunner was now in charge of the elephants. An additional program note said that Charles Bouleware had added three animal acts. George Brown was said to be driving a 12 horse hitch to the No. 1 bandwagon in the street parade, and another item said that a new stock car loaded with horses was added in Bakersfield bringing the total number of baggage stock to 65. The report of the additional car with horses is certain to be in error as was also an announcement the following week that Howe's Great London would be enlarged to 25 cars because of the good business of late. Reports do indicate the show did remarkably fine business in California, however, there is no evidence that Golden and his partners ever seriously contemplated enlarging to 25 cars.

The May 27, 1922 Billboard advised that weather so far had been good and that Howe's

Kenneth Waite (large hat in front center), Elvie Evans, midget, and rest of Howes Great London clown contingent, season of 1922. Gordon Jones Collection.





This beautiful letterhead was designed and printed by Riverside for the Mugivan, Bowers, and Ballard owned Howes Great London Circus and Van Amburg Trained Wild Animals in 1921. Mike Golden and his partners, Milt Runkle, and Charles J. Adams obtained all of the unused printing material of this show, including lithos, newspaper ad mats, heralds, and letterheads to be used on their circus in 1922. The letter pictured here was sent to E. W. Adams Feb. 25, 1922. Note that the former Lancaster, Mo. address has been crossed out and Palo Alto, Calif. the winterquarters address for the Golden, Runkle, and Adams show written in. Coloring for the letterhead design is outstanding. The title is in orange with black outline on a light blue background. Animals and performers are in natural colors while other lettering is in blue with a light pink-green background. Author's Collection.

had the first rain of the season at Vallejo, May 8. At Ukiah, May 10, only a matinee was given in that city which saw day and date opposition with the Foley & Burk Shows (Carnival). Eureka, May 11, was circus hungry and upon arrival the show found a tremendous crowd at the runs and later the masses attended the two performances. Business was so good that many patrons were seated on the straw. The sideshow ran from 9 A.M. until 11:30 at night. At Fortuna, May 12, only one show was scheduled and the City Council pleaded with Mr. Golden for a night show but due to the long jump to Willits the next day it couldn't be scheduled. San Rafael, May 9, was sort of a homecoming for Mr. Adams as everyone from the mayor on down seemed to be related to him. The article concluded saying that Kenneth R. Waite, producing clown, now had the banners and that a new sideshow top had been ordered which would be delivered soon.

Anderson, May 29, was the final California stand and the show then moved into Oregon

with the first date coming at Ashland. A total of 26 stands were played in Oregon, although not consecutively, while Al G. Barnes which had preceeded the show by about a month played only 7. Three stands in opposition were as follows.

Stand	Barnes Date	Howe's Date
Roseburg	May 4	June 1
Eugene	May 5	June 3
Portland	May 8-9	June 17

The June 17, 1922 Billboard related the show's doings in Oregon saying that Howe's Great London was the first circus in five years to play Ashland and at Medford, May 30, the big show and sideshow were loaned to the Veterans for their big Memorial Day parade at 10 A.M. The regular circus parade followed at 12:30. Two parades, plus two performances, gave the Howe's windjammers quite a workout that day.

At Roseburg, Ore., June 1, the inmates of the Old Soldier's Home were guests of the show. Other notes in The Billboard said that Jerry Irwin (Jules Jacot) was breaking a new lion in for the aerial lion act and that Marie Baudet was now dancing during the lioness act as well as in the spec. Shorty Phillips had taken charge of the baggage stock while John Fowler, sideshow manager, had received a new shipment of snakes. Four large army type searchlights had been added to spotlight the various acts in the performance and Manager Golden said that business of late had been more than pleasing.

Sunday, June 4, was the first day off so far in the season. Marshfield, Ore. June 5, produced a turnaway in the afternoon and packed house at night. The sideshow kept open to catch the come-out that night and this resulted in a delay in departure of the train to Springfield where Howe's was said to have been the first circus to play there in some time. At Albany, June 7, it was claimed that Howe's was the first circus in five years. General agent, Frank Cassidy, had so far done a great job in putting the show into long fresh towns which wasn't an easy task since Barnes covered the Pacific Coast states so thoroughly each year. It rained all day in Silverton on June 9 but generally the weather so far during the season had been fine. The June 24, 1922 Billboard said that Neuberg, June 10, another maiden town for the show, gave good business. It was also announced that Milt Runkle had to leave the show on account of bad health and that Golden took over the treasurer's job personally. Assumably Golden purchased Runkle's interest in the show at this time or shortly thereafter. A final note said that new costumes for the ballet dancers and some new wardrobe for the spec had recently been received.

After playing St. Helens on June 20 the show moved into Washington to play Vancouver, Kelso, South Bend, and Chehalis, and then went back into Oregon at Hood River on June 26. It remained in the state for a total of 6 stands then returned to Washington for 15 dates.

The July 15, 1922 Billboard said that the original lot contracted at The Dalles, June 29, was under water due to heavy rains but that after a long run from Bend, the finding of a new lot, the show gave two performances with good



This photo of Michael E. (Mike) Golden appeared in The Billboard shortly after he and Milt Runkle purchased the Palmer Bros. Circus in the fall of 1921. Author's Collection.

crowds in attendance. The wet conditions were unusual because of late the show had encountered extremely dusty weather in both Washington and Oregon. Shorty Phillips was complimented on keeping the stock in such fine shape despite these difficulties. Performance notes said that Billie Burton with her black, brown, and polar bear act was a big hit and that Grace Bartlett's elephant number went over well. Pasco, July 3, was the first stand on the return to Washington and that evening Karl Knutson, 24 hour man, left for Ellensburg, the next stand, by airplane which was a new experience for him. The show had a good day in Ellensburg but on leaving Pasco the night before someone broke into the steam calliope wagon and stole two cornets and a baritone horn from the band's instruments which were stored there. July 4 in Ellensburg was a happy one for the personnel who enjoyed the traditional festivities and also for the management as capacity crowds were on hand for both performances. The show continued to get good response from its audiences. There was big applause for Ruth Irwin and her lionesses as well as for Grace Bartlett and her elephants. Reviews said that Jules Jacot, now working 11 African lions, was well received.

While at Puyallup, July 6, the show had many visitors from the Foley & Burk Shows playing nearby. While in this area new canvas for the cookhouse and sideshow arrived from Seattle and the management announced the show now had a complete new spread of canvas.

Howe's played a total of 19 stands in Washington while Barnes, which had come in several weeks earlier, made 13. Only one date saw opposition with Barnes, Everett, played by Howe's Great London on July 13, had seen Barnes back on May 17, almost two months earlier. Also in Everett at the time Howe's played both Sells-Floto and Ringling-Barnum's opposition paper was up. Despite all

of the circus activity in the town, Howe's claimed two excellent houses. Many visitors were on the lot at Everett from the Sheesley Carnival which was in the area.

The July 29, 1922 Billboard in commenting on recent activities of Howe's Great London said that Wild Horse Mike Brahm and his troupe of wild west and menage acts always drew them in for the concert and it noted that Gordon Jones, trick and fancy rider, receives much applause. Jack Lindell's bucking horse takes on all outside riders as an added attraction. Kenneth Waite was said to now have 20 clowns and puts on real fine numbers, but that figure seems to be somewhat exaggerated. O. A. Gilson's pre show concerts were getting plenty of praise from both the newspapers and the public.

Newport, July 19, was the last Washington stand and the show headed eastward through Idaho playing two stands in the state at Sand Point and Bonners Ferry. Entering Montana, July 22, at Libby, Howe's played a total of 17 dates in that state. At Kalispell, July 25, the show had two turnaway houses. During the afternoon a storm suddenly came up but it cleared off before the night show and business was not adversely affected. At Harve, July 27, the afternoon house was capacity and the night crowd also good. That evening a number of the show's personnel were attacked by striking railroad men, thinking they were strike breakers, when they were returning to the cars from the lot. It took some fast talking to convince the strikers they were with the show. La Munes, a midget entertainer, formerly with the C. A. Worthem Shows (Carnival) joined the sideshow.

The 1922 circus season was marred almost from the beginning by industrial and railroad labor strikes in many parts of the country. It was a season of turmoil in many industries and one of the worst years ever for serious strikes. In July the situation got particularly bad with a strike of coal mines and railroads in Kentucky and West Virginia and this resulted in extremely difficult times for railroad shows. In other areas strikes were always breaking out and show owners were fearful of being caught in the middle and becoming stranded and unable to move. History would later record that 1922 was one of the most difficult of all seasons for showmen due to this condition.

Continuing eastward Howe's Great London entered North Dakota, Aug. 10, at Beach and after stands at Dickinson and Mandon moved on into Minnesota.

The Sept. 9, 1922 Billboard said the show registered favorable business in North Dakota but farmers were so busy then that attendance at night was much better than in the afternoon. Golden recently made a trip to the advance car and instituted a few changes but no details were given. Back on the show Jack Casteel resigned as assistant equestrian director and domestic animal trainer and boss hostler Phillips purchased several head of large gray baggage horses. The same issue said that although Howe's had not been greatly affected by the railroad strike troubles so far they were giving many shows fits, causing late arrivals, missed parades, and some shows were even stranded on sidings for several days at the time.

The show went into Minnesota at Breckenridge, August 15, with a total of 9

(Season of 1922)

BURBANK ONE DAY ONLY THURS., APRIL 6



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HOWE'S GREAT LONDON CIRCUS and **VAN AMBERG'S WILD ANIMALS**

2 Jungleland
Beauties in one act.

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CINDERELLA IN JUNGLELAND

A DAZZLING EXTRAVAGANZA WITH COUNTLESS ANIMALS AND PEOPLE.

50c Only Big Circus to Restore PRE-WAR Prices
Performances 2 and 8 p. m. Doors open 1 and 7

50c

Newspaper ad for Howe's Great London stand at Burbank, Calif. April 6, 1922. Author's Collection.

stands scheduled in the state. While at Graceville, Minn., August 24, a bad storm came up and flattened the big top as well as the lesser canvas. This was no staged blowdown for the movie cameras but the real thing and damage was considerable, although the show was able to pick up and move on to Milbank, S. D. where performances were scheduled the following day. Then it was back to Minnesota at Montevideo, August 26, and the show remained in the state until Sept. 5 with the final stand being at Worthington.

Howe's next moved into Iowa at Sheldon with stands at Emmettsburg, Britt, New Hampton, Dyersville, Rhinebeck, Cedar Falls, Clakesville, and Clarion to follow. It was scheduled to play Ft. Dodge, Iowa, Sept. 16, the first circus in that town for three years.

By the time the show reached Ft. Dodge the railroad situation had become unbearable for Howe's. So many roads were on strike it was almost impossible to set any kind of route and the situation seemed to be getting worse all the time. After a quick survey of possible winter quarters sites in Ft. Dodge and upon finding one available, Howe's decided to end the season that day and go into quarters following the two performances. Quarters were established at the Hawkeye Fair Grounds in the city.

O. L. Gilson, the show's bandleader, wrote in the Sept. 30, 1922 Billboard that the Howe showfolks had scattered after the closing. He mentioned that Mike Brahm had taken his people and stock back to his home in Los



Little Virginia Falkendorf on Woman in Shoe float and other spec girls on Howe's Great London lot, 1922. Gordon Jones Collection.

Angeles and that at the new quarters Manager Golden had already engaged blacksmiths, wagon makers, and painters for the winter work and had set his department heads for next season when the show would go on 25 cars. Shortly thereafter, the rumor floated around that instead of enlarging to 25 cars the show was actually being cut to 3 for 1923.

The Billboard sent a representative to interview Golden personally on the conflicting reports. Golden denied the show would be cut to 3 cars and would say only that he would go out next season stronger than ever. He remarked, "We had a very nice season until the railroad situation became serious and we were compelled to close at Ft. Dodge, Iowa. We

have very nice winter quarters and will use the same title next year."

A few weeks later The Billboard said that the Howe's Great London Circus was wintering in one of the finest equipped fairgrounds in the country. The animals were quartered under the grandstand which was well heated, the draft horses were in two of the three large barns while the ring stock were in a special barn which provided nearly every animal with a private stall. The show's rail cars were parked

about a half mile away and the offices located in the administration building. A lion act consisting of 6 animals had recently been sent out on a 22 week vaudeville engagement. The menagerie at quarters was open to visitors at all times for an admission of 10 cents and there was a cookhouse and rooms for all personnel on the fairgrounds.

As the 1922 season came to a close it was generally conceded by most show owners that it had been a rough one. Al G. Barnes for the first time didn't return to the Pacific Coast to winter, instead it closed October 27 at Gainesville, Texas and went into quarters in Dallas. Al G. said he was afraid the show might get stranded enroute to California due to the railroad strike. The American Circus Corporation had also taken its lumps and decided that in 1923 it would send out only three circuses instead of the four which had been on the road this season.

Golden's earlier announcement that he would again use the Howe's title didn't hold up. The title was changed to Golden Bros. Circus before the beginning of the 1923 season. He and Adams continued with the show in 1923 and Golden was sole owner in 1924. For those interested in the further history of the Golden show they are invited to consult my article entitled "Golden Bros. Circus 1923-24" which appeared in the Jan.-Feb issue of The White Tops. Back copies can be obtained from the editor of that publication.

The tableau wagon with three diamond shaped mirrors on the side which Howe's Great London used in 1922 is currently at the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wis. and two baggage wagons in that collection in all probability were also on the show.

For help rendered in the research of this article I would like to thank Joe Rettinger, Gordon Jones, Chang Reynolds, Fred Pfenning, and the Circus World Museum.

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ROBBINS 1965 ARTICLE COMING

CHS member Jack S. Smith, who operated the Robbins Bros. Circus in 1965 and 1966, is in the process of writing the complete history of that show, as only the owner can tell it. He is anxious to have help from any BANDWAGON readers who have information or photos of the show.

He is especially anxious that any one living in the area near Donora, Penna., provide information concerning the disposition of the equipment after the show folded there in 1966.

Please contact Mr. Smith at 117 Salisbury Drive, W., Tarpon Springs, Florida 33589, or send information to the BANDWAGON and it will be forwarded.

ADDRESS CHANGE REMINDER

Once again we must advise that issues of the Bandwagon that are lost due to old addresses can not be replaced free of charge. The Postal Service will not forward bulk mail, the old address and the new one are sent back to the publisher with 10¢ postage due. The magazine is discarded.

A FRANCONI IN AMERICA: The New York Hippodrome Of 1853

By A. H. Saxon

*Editor's Note - A. H. Saxon is Professor of Theatre at the City College and Graduate School of the City University of New York. He is the author of *Enter Foot and Horse*, the definitive history of the nineteenth century hippodramas. The present article first appeared in the French circus magazine *Le Cirque dans L'Univers* and is reprinted with the kind permission of the editor, L.-R. Dauven.*

In the early weeks of 1853 the attention of spectacle-minded New Yorkers was captured by two ambitious projects. To the north of the city, on a site near the present 42nd Street Public Library, the huge glass and iron edifice of the Crystal Palace was slowly taking shape; while a short distance to the south, in the vicinity of Madison Square at 23rd Street and Broadway, the considerably less solid Franconi's Hippodrome reared its wooden towers and canvas-covered spars with a celerity little short of magical. The first of these mammoth undertakings had been conceived in response to London's Crystal Palace and was to serve for international expositions. The Hippodrome, however, supposedly drew its inspiration from Paris and the reputation of the Paris Hippodrome, whose structure and type of entertainment were as yet unknown in America.

It was during the winter of 1852-53 that a group of American showmen, including Avery Smith, John J. Nathans, Richard Sands, and Titus and Seth B. Howes, formed a syndicate to introduce the hippodrome to America. As their project called for the introduction of foreign performers as well, they entered into an arrangement with Henri Franconi (about whom I shall have more to say below) who agreed to supply plans for the building, to bring to America a company of French equestrians, and to serve as general director. The building itself (Figure 1), occupying an area of approximately two acres, was erected by the architect Aldridge Wingham Jr. from the designs furnished by Franconi. The exterior was an unembellished wall 20 feet high of a single brick in thickness. Two towers, located on the side facing Broadway, contained the principal entrances, ticket offices, saloons, and dressing rooms. Additional entrances were at the other sides of the building, and the wall was pierced by some 70 windows. The area within was in the shape of an oval, 300 feet long by 200 feet wide. Spectators were accommodated on 7 tiers of seats running the entire circumference of the building and protected by a light roof of boards sheeted over with tin. Estimates of the

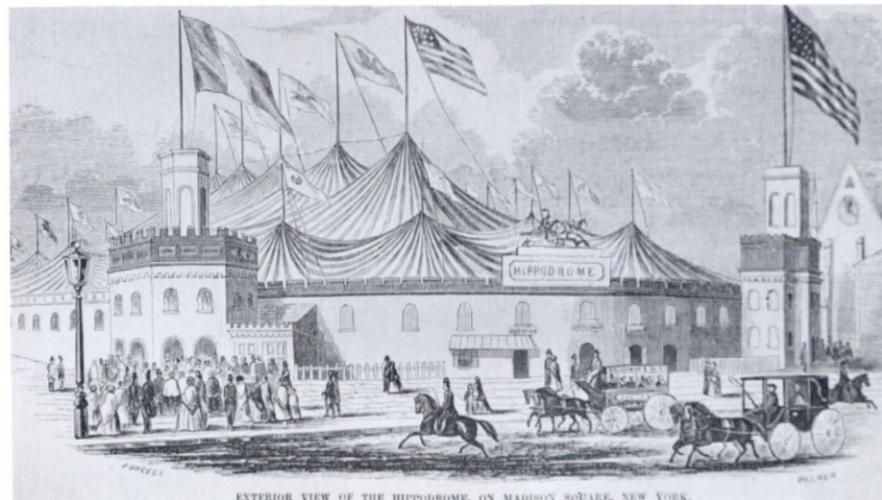
seating capacity ranged all the way from 4,000 to 10,000, with the actual number probably nearer 6,000. The remainder of the interior was completely covered by 90,000 square feet of canvas, striped in green and white, and supported in the middle by five poles 80 feet high and by quarter poles at the sides (Figure 2). The hippodrome track was 1,000 feet in circumference and enclosed a vast area laid out in parterres with shrubs, illuminated fountains, and flower vases. In order to admit the sumptuous floats and chariots which the proprietors envisioned, the entrance to the track was 30 feet high by 20 feet wide. Illumination was supplied by 1,000 gas jets. The construction of this huge building, begun in March and completed in April, took but twenty-five days.¹

While the Hippodrome itself was being rushed to completion, equally frantic preparations were being made for the arrival of Franconi's company. The New York *Daily Times* reported the cost of the building alone as \$20,000; but the cost of the total enterprise — transportation, wardrobe, paraphernalia, salaries, etc. — was estimated by the *Illustrated News* at ten times this amount. One hundred young women, according to the *Spirit of the Times* (26 March 1853), were being sent to school in nearby Williamsburg (a section of present-day Brooklyn) to learn the art of equitation; sixty persons were employed on costumes; twenty men were busy on various "trappings"; and no less than four different

establishments were working on machines. Among the last was a colossal chariot, "The Car of the Muses," whose cost was said to be \$20,000. While the reviewer for the *Spirit of the Times* was eagerly looking forward to piquant French equestriennes "in pink tights and abbreviated petticoats," the ship *Ocean Queen* arrived in New York carrying seven ostriches trained to run in races which Franconi had purchased in London. In April a temporary setback occurred when some equipment destined for the Hippodrome was lost at sea in the wreck of the *Sea Duck*. Finally, during the night of 15-16 April, the steamship *Washington* arrived from Bremen via Southampton with Henri Franconi, his troupe of performers, and "the extensive stud of horses, wardrobe, chariots, and general paraphernalia belonging to his famous Parisian establishment."² Among the persons listed as accompanying Franconi were: Mme. Franconi and daughter Angeline; Joseph Chiarini and his wife and child; the brothers Auguste and Francois Siegrist, together with the wife and children of the former; Benjamin Stickney Jr. and his son John; John Nicolo and three children; Mme. Mason and two children; Benoit and Valerie Marin; and Mlles. Angeline Lebrun, Leontine Girardy, Adeline Bigout, Caroline Vidal, and Eugenie Cert. Other performers were scheduled to arrive later.

Meanwhile, there had been considerable ballyhoo in the press. The appearance on horseback of Henri Franconi — reputed to be "the best living rider" — was eagerly anticipated. The Hippodrome itself, said to far surpass the hippodrome at Paris or anywhere else on the Continent, was to function as a sort

Figure 1. Franconi's New York Hippodrome. Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion, 18 June 1853.



of educational institution, re-creating the gallant fetes of the past, the games of the Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians, and presenting a generous sampling of gladiatorial exhibitions, with and without wild beasts. Of particular interest was a much-publicized "Car of Flora" which Franconi was to bring with him from Europe. This chariot, as a dazzled writer for the *Spirit of the Times* (2 April 1853) declared,

will prove more attractive from the fact that the figures adjoining it are living beings. The grouping forms an allegorical tableau, the figures disposed and supported in every conceivable position, contrary to all the known laws of gravitation, by ingenious machinery, having every appearance of aerial suspensions. Thus Mercury will be seen on tiptoe as if about launching forth from Olympus; Bacchus, attended by his jolly crew, in air suspended; dancing girls, whose only support seems the wreath of living flowers they wield, &c. &c., *ad infinitum*. Trials of speed in which Arabian, English, and American thoroughbreds were to contend against each other and ostriches; hurdle leaps and steeplechases; the amusements of various nations and eras, including English stag hunts and the Laplander on his reindeer-drawn sledge; gorgeous processions and tournaments with upward of a hundred horsemen and horsewomen in historically accurate costumes and armor — these and many similar wonders were promised the avid readers of the daily newspapers during the weeks preceding the opening.

No doubt as a reward for these and future services, the members of the press were invited to a final dress rehearsal on the evening of 29 April. A program for this occasion, preserved in the Theatre Collection of the New York Public Library, lists the following events: (1) La Course Grec, with equestriennes engaging in one-mile heats; (2) a trapeze act by Messrs. Marin and Sylvestre; (3) Les Jeux de la 4me Olympiade — ten horses ridden at full speed by five equestrians standing up; (4) La Course des Singes, a travesty of a turf scene by monkeys, mounted on ponies and dressed as jockeys; (5) Exercises of the Manege, in which Franconi appeared with his dancing horse Johnster; (6) a number in which several ostriches were chased around the course by horses; (7) a Grand Prize Race between three chariots, two horses abreast, driven by three ladies of the company. After an "Intermission to Refresh" the second part of the evening's entertainment got under way with (8) the pageant of a Grand Tournament, featuring "The Field of the Cloth of Gold," a procession, and a tilting scene. This was followed by (9) a brief concert by a cornet band; (10) an exhibition of Jeux Icariens (i.e., a Risley act) by the Nicolo family, supported on a platform that moved around the course; (11) Franconi on his trick horse Bayard (Figure 3); (12) a Grand Steeplechase by five of the equestriennes; (13) La Perche Equipoise by the Siegrist Brothers, utilizing a pole 30 feet high held by one and mounted by the other; (14) a contest between two war chariots, four horses abreast, driven by Messrs. Franconi and Marin; and concluding with (15) a Scene from the Italian Corso, introducing a troop of unsaddled thoroughbreds at full liberty.

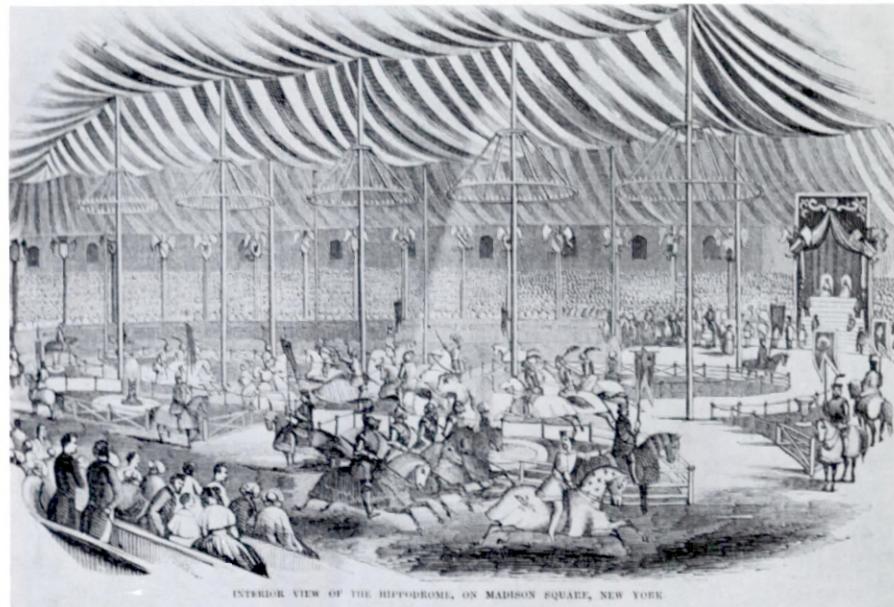


Figure 2. "The Field of the Cloth of Gold." Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion, 18 June 1853.

The official opening of the Hippodrome came the following Monday evening on 2 May 1853. Hundreds of people were turned away, while those fortunate enough to secure tickets for this momentous event made a grand rush into the stands, knocking down each other in their determination to get the best seats. Notwithstanding a few mild complaints about the dimness of the lighting and the quality of the music, and an accident during a race in which a chariot overturned and landed on its female driver, the reviewers and spectators professed themselves delighted. The critic for the *Herald* (3 May) was especially intrigued by the horse race of the young equestriennes; while the rapturous reviewer for the *Spirit of the Times* (7 May) claimed that the Hippodrome was provoking as much excitement as had the recent appearances of Jenny Lind. The enthusiasm of the audience, he continued, baffled description: "each and everyone seems imbued with a very strong affection, or partiality, for that noble animal — the horse." As for Franconi and his horses, "the latter are models of beauty and perfection.... The buck jumping of his horse Bayard, a powerful and heavily limbed animal, is a most remarkably difficult, beautiful, and daring exhibition of precision in training never equalled." Other critics reserved their highest praise for the pageantry of the Grand Tournament:

Classic lore, ancient history, Walter Scott's picture of the tournament, the songs of chivalry, are all competent to give an idea of what is to be seen at Franconi's Hippodrome. Our artist has furnished us with an illustration of the *Tournament* (Figure 2), in which a grand procession of over one hundred and fifty persons and one hundred horses forms a prominent attraction. Amid the blasts of the clarion, two knights engage in conflict; one falls by the hand of the other; his horse is lanced, falls over dead, and is borne motionless upon a hurdle from the

avenue! This one thing alone supersedes anything America has ever witnessed.³ Between matinees and evening performances, the daily attendance was estimated at 16,000.

In subsequent weeks new acts were introduced to preserve the sense of novelty. The Car of Flora (Figure 4) soon put in its appearance; and in May several camels and a young "astonishingly sagacious" elephant were added. By then a few reviewers were becoming bored with the emphasis on pageantry and were advising Franconi to "take away some of the cloth of gold character and put on a little more horse cloth."⁴ In June Sylvestre began performing a revolving globe act on an inclined plane 250 feet long and 40 feet high; a Professor Wise promised to ascend in his "mammoth balloon Irene"; and a new pageant of a Carousel was added, prompting the critic for the *Spirit of the Times* (11 June) to remark that "it warms the blood to see those beautiful French damsels armed, *cap-a-pie*, slashing their long swords at Turks' heads, on coursers at full speed, with such precision." Toward the middle of the month a new spectacle, reputedly based on the Fêtes de Versailles in 1664, was introduced. In one scene entitled "Pleasures of the Enchanted Isle" a gigantic rock opened to reveal a corps de ballet of 100 grouped in "chaste and easy positions." Cupids sprang out of vases or appeared mounted on ponies that ascended from the earth; trick trees put forth buds, blossomed, and withered before the eyes of the spectators; horses went leaping across a canal; and some 500 men and women appeared in costumes of the French court. But the Car of Flora continued as the dominant attraction, charming spectators and reviewers alike with the easy abandon and graceful positions of the ballet girls who formed its chief adornment.

Throughout the summer and early autumn the Hippodrome remained open. At the end of June three consecutive days of rain turned the track into a sea of mud, but performances went on as usual. In July Sands arrived with four more ostriches which were ridden around the track in races. Professor Nixon and his "astonishing infants" did an act; and on 15



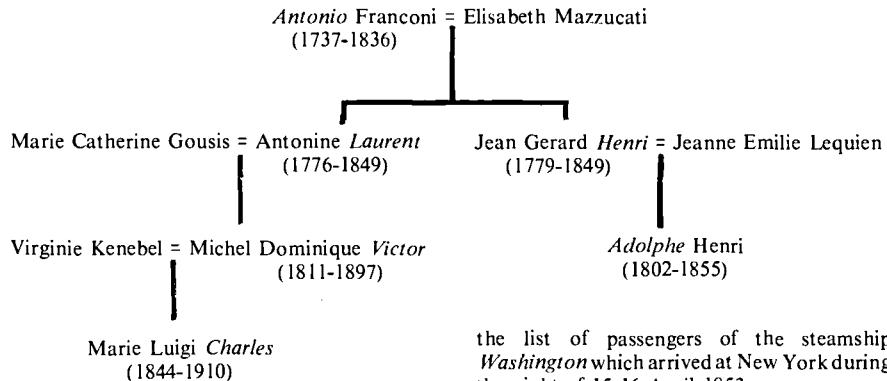
Figure 3. Henri Franconi on his trick horse Bayard. The Illustrated News, 14 May 1853.

September Franconi took a benefit, on which occasion his wife was scheduled to make her first appearance at the Hippodrome. By November the Perche Equipoise act was being performed by Marin and Sylvestre, and Chiarini and Stickney were each driving five horses in "The Rival Postilions." The season finally came to an end on 26 November, and the company then went on to Boston.⁵

The inaugural season of Franconi's Hippodrome was destined to be its finest and most profitable. Even before the 1853 season had ended, one senses, in reading the journals, a marked decrease in popularity. In part this may have been due to the controversy related below. Undoubtedly, too, the American public, after its initial enthusiasm for this new form of spectacle, had begun to grow jaded with it. At any rate, the 1854 season, which ran from 26 June to 23 September, is barely touched on in the newspapers of the day. Franconi and his troupe presented much the same program they had the previous year: "The Field of the Cloth of Gold" was revived and the Car of Flora again appeared; but only a few new numbers, such as a pageant of St. George and the Dragon, were added. The extent to which performances at the Hippodrome degenerated this season may be seen in a notice in the *Daily Times* for 1 September. By this date a regular feature of the evening program was a series of *foot* races, run by New York firemen for the prize of a silver speaking trumpet! Upon Franconi's departure the building was occupied, beginning 25 September, by the Great Southern Circus Company to which the Siegrist Brothers now transferred their allegiance. The novelty of this enterprise was that regular circus acts were given in the center of the arena while the usual hippodrome activities proceeded on the surrounding track. In the summer of 1855 the

Siegrists briefly returned to the Hippodrome, while Franconi, in association with Bunnell Runnals, appeared at "Franconi's American and French Circus" at Bedford Avenue and Taylor Street.⁶ By now, however, the days of the Hippodrome were numbered, and in 1856 it was demolished to make way for the Fifth Avenue Hotel. By this date, too, the man with the reputation of "the best living rider" seems to have permanently departed the New York scene.

I come now to the most intriguing aspect of this history — namely, the identity of the person named Henri Franconi. The Franconi Family is the oldest and most illustrious in the history of the French circus. From the end of the eighteenth century until the beginning of the twentieth it produced a succession of brilliant riders and managers whose fame was considerable on both sides of the Atlantic. A number of descendants through the female line are still active in the circus. In the present chart



the list of passengers of the steamship *Washington* which arrived at New York during the night of 15-16 April 1853.

Having established to my satisfaction, at least, that the director of the New York Hippodrome was indeed named Henri Franconi, I next sought the advice of my distinguished colleague Tristan Rémy, the foremost expert on the history of the French circus, who informed me of the existence of an Henri Franconi who was active at the Paris Hippodrome in 1845-48 and who served as veterinary to the President of the Republic in 1851. This Henri, it would seem, was Henri Narcisse Franconi, a little-known son of Jean Gérard Henri, born on 24 October 1818. But at this point I arrived at a fresh obstacle in my research. In the immigration records at the National Archives the age of the Henri arriving on the *Washington* is given as 30 years 2 months, that of his wife (whose Christian name is not recorded) as 20 years 6 months, and that of their daughter Angeline as 2 years 1 month. As Henri Narcisse Franconi would have been 34, rather than 30, years old in the spring of 1853, it would appear he cannot be the Henri with whom we have to deal. But perhaps this was a member of a German branch of the family? The steamer on which the troupe sailed, it will be recalled, originated in Bremen, touching only at Southampton on its voyage to New York. How, then, does one explain the claims made in the newspapers for this being a French company and for Franconi bringing with him the equipment from "his famous

Parisian establishment"? The ship passenger list, moreover, gives the country of birth for all three Franconi as France. In the attempt to shed light on this enigma I have searched the Parisian birth, marriage, and death records in the Archives du Département du Seine, with particular attention to the birth records for 1823 and 1851. But aside from the birth entry for Henri Narcisse Franconi with the date reported above, I have been unable to locate any references to him or his wife or daughter, nearly all of the civil archives having been destroyed during the period of the Commune.

There is, nevertheless, a perfectly credible explanation of this mystery, an explanation that provides adequate reason to believe Henri Narcisse Franconi did indeed appear at the New York Hippodrome. Here again the New York newspapers are our initial guides. On 14 May 1853 the New York *Clipper* published a brief item with the suggestive title "Have We a Franconi Among Us?" This was followed on 28 May by a much longer article in which the writer charged that the Franconi appearing at the Hippodrome was not "the original Franconi of Parisian notoriety," that the featured performers were actually from Sands' circus company which had spent the previous winter at the Bowery Circus, and that, in fact, the Hippodrome enterprise was a colossal piece of humbug. The reason for this imposition, according to the writer, was perfectly obvious. The proprietors wished to get up a hippodrome after the manner of the one in Paris and, feeling foreign attractions were bound to be more popular than native ones, advertised their scheme as a Franconi project. An agent in Paris had supplied them with descriptions of the acts at the Paris Hippodrome and any other information they needed; a riding school was established across the river in Williamsburg for the training of equestriennes; and fraudulent letters were inserted into the newspapers detailing the progress of Franconi and his troupe, the shipping of the various animals and the Car of Flora, and finally the arrival of the company from Paris.

Meanwhile, the *Daily Times* had arrived at essentially the same conclusions. As a writer in the issue of 16 May 1853 pointed out, "People did not stop to inquire how many Franconi there are in the world. They did not permit themselves to doubt the ubiquity of the equestrian gentleman, nor to account for his simultaneous appearances in London, Paris, Dublin, and other populous places. They were content that he should signify his Royal intention of visiting these shores, and prepared to do homage to the illustrious gentleman when he should arrive." The exposé was continued in the issue of 27 May, with the writer now giving facetious directions on "How to Start a Hippodrome":

It must be assumed as a postulate that humbug, in its severest form, is the great essential in all transactions with the public. ... Procure a stout trumpet, and blow on it yourself with might and main. Announce, with as much noise as possible, that you have entered into an arrangement with the best known Equestrian Company in the world, and that you have fitted out a fleet for their transportation. Lay particular stress on the enormous outlay which the speculation will

involve, and appeal pathetically to the public press for its commendation and support. ... Then begin your secret operations. Scour the town for a sufficient number of good looking Cyprians. Send them to the Kingdom of Williamsburg, that they may learn something of side-saddles and chariot racing. ... By taking a trip across the ocean, you will be able to secure the services of eight or nine mediocre circus riders with high-sounding names. If you can secure a thirty-second cousin of the Paris Hippodromist, do so, for in these matters a good name is everything. It is quite immaterial that the artistes be other than the refuse of European establishments, for of course your great aim is to humbug. ... Your giraffes, ostriches, camels, monkeys, etc. may be borrowed temporarily from the various traveling menageries you already own; and your horses (excepting perhaps a couple of trick stallions) may be purchased in Virginia. Maintain a profound air of secrecy concerning these acquisitions, for it will not do to let the public catch wind of them. ... Concerning your American artistes, you must have a rigid rule prohibiting any male or female rider from surpassing the Foreigners. ... The imported article must be maintained in value, and it will be more to your advantage to have indifferent performances by Parisians than first rate ones by native artists. ... If you pursue the above directions in a proper spirit, you will in a few years be able to retire to the Highlands, and in leisurely ease laugh at the gulls who patronized your performances simply because they believed your blatant humbug, and were fools enough to prefer foreign mediocrity to native talent.



I have quoted at length from this article ironic and xenophobic as its tone certainly is, I believe it contains, in part, at least, the truth of the matter. It was general knowledge, and by no means a secret, that equestriennes equestriennes were being trained for the Hippodrome in Williamsburg. That "eight or nine" European circus performers arrived in America is also demonstrably true from the immigration records. And finally, the insinuation that the Henri Franconi who arrived with these artists was a cousin (though by no means so distantly removed as the indignant journalist would have us believe) of the "Paris Hippodromist" Victor Franconi is a possibility we have already considered. As the charges by the writer for the *Clipper* that the acts at the Hippodrome were merely based on descriptions of those at the Parisian establishment and that fraudulent letters had been published detailing the progress of Franconi and his troupe from Paris, even here we are not so far from the mark. For not only was Henri Franconi not "the original Franconi of Parisian notoriety," but it is also certain neither he nor the artists accompanying him arrived from

Paris. They had, in fact, embarked at Southampton — and it is to England rather than France that we must turn for the final chapter in this involved history.

The London Crystal Palace, erected in Hyde Park to accommodate the original Great Exposition, was but one of many attractions visitors to London had to choose from during the spring and summer of 1851. Like its descendant in America, it was complemented by a hippodrome — the first of its kind in England — located a short distance away opposite the Broad Walk in Kensington. The Grand National Hippodrome was owned and managed by the circus showman William Batty, who entertained fond hopes of capitalizing on the proximity of his grandiose neighbor. Since 1843, too, Batty had been proprietor and director of London's most famous circus, Astley's Amphitheatre at the foot of Westminster Bridge. On 1 May 1851 both the Crystal Palace and Hippodrome opened their doors, with the latter promising such features as histrionic pageants, tournaments, chariot racing, steeplechasing, Roman coursers, ostrich racing, old English sports, and a troupe of French equestrians.⁸ A few days later a review in the *Illustrated London News* (10 May) identified these last as being from the Paris Hippodrome, led by the equestrian Louis Soulier. The pageant being presented at this time was "The Field of the Cloth of Gold," which earlier had proved so successful at Paris. Meanwhile, plane were underway for a rival attraction at Cremorne Gardens, where a circus building was added to the pleasure gardens and on 16 June "Franconi's" troupe from the "Cirque National de France" was advertised to open.⁹ Unfortunately, the advertisements and notices in the newspapers furnish little information as to the identity of the company in question, but on 26 June the *Theatrical Journal* published a much fuller account of the enterprise. The reviewer was particularly impressed by one of the riders: "The most surprising feat of managing a horse ever yet accomplished by any rider we have witnessed . . . was the wonderful management of a beautiful grey horse, rode by Mons. Henri Franconi, — the different exercises this astonishing rider went through with the animal must be seen to be understood and appreciated." The company of Henri Franconi continued at the Cremorne pavilion until the end of August, at which time he and his artists, together with Franconi's highly trained steeds and "buck jumping" horse that seemed to fly through the air, transferred to Batty's Hippodrome. This last remained open until 11 October, closing, as it had begun the previous spring, in perfect concurrence with the Crystal Palace.¹⁰

In the following year Batty opened his hippodrome for a second and final season. By this time his association with Henri Franconi was firmly established. The latter, now billed as the "founder of the Paris Hippodrome," was engaged to superintend the horses, ponies, ostriches, elephants, and other animals at the Hippodrome, although Batty himself, contrary to the assertion by Frost, remained firmly in control as manager.¹¹ In July additional

artists were secured by Batty from the Paris Hippodrome; and in August the Siegrist Brothers with their perch act were billed to appear at Astley's.¹² The Hippodrome remained open from 31 May to 11 September this year, and the advertisements for the final week are especially intriguing. Spectators were urged to lose no time in visiting the Hippodrome, for "directly it closes this season, Mr. Batty intends shipping the whole of the building, animals, horses, etc., and performers, to bring out a similar amusement next summer in New York, in consequence of the Great Exposition which is to take place there."¹³ Despite the suggestion in these announcements, William Batty had no intention of personally recreating his Hippodrome in New York. Throughout the winter of 1852-53 he kept Astley's open; then, following a final performance on the night of 12 March, he retired from circus management and leased the Amphitheatre to William Cooke. Meanwhile, during the concluding weeks of his directorship he continued to employ the Siegrists and several other artists from Paris, although Franconi himself, who with his wife had spent the previous winter at Astley's, does not seem to have been among them.

With the above documentary evidence in hand, we are now in a position to arrive at several conclusions regarding the New York Hippodrome and its enigmatic director. To begin with, the immediate inspiration for the 1853 venture was almost certainly not the Paris Hippodrome of Victor Franconi, but rather Batty's Grand National Hippodrome in London. The much-heralded opening of the Crystal Palace and the anticipated influx of visitors to the metropolis had provided sufficient inducement for William Batty to erect his hippodrome, and the parallel with developments in New York is obvious. In addition, the group of American showmen who financed the New York enterprise had several other factors in their favor, not the least of these being the retirement of Batty and the final closing of his hippodrome the previous year. With a few exceptions like the building itself, it is my opinion that the proclaimed intention to ship Batty's establishment to New York was in fact carried out — that the costumes, trapings, and assorted paraphernalia belonging to the London Hippodrome, together with some of the more exotic animals (the ostriches, for example) and artists engaged by Batty, were either purchased or hired by the New York proprietors, at least one of whom, Richard Sands, had been in England the preceding winter.¹⁴ The pageant of "The Field of the Cloth of Gold" which New Yorkers marveled at in the spring of 1853 was the same Londoners had viewed during the season of 1851, and the programs of the New York Hippodrome were closely patterned after those of their London predecessor. Similarly, several of the artists who appeared in New York had formerly been in Batty's employ. The Siegrist Brothers as we have seen, had spent the winter of 1852 at Astley's. The career of Benjamin Stickney Jr. (who in 1838 had married the widow of the clown John Ducrow, brother of the great Andrew) had for many years been intimately associated with the same establishment. And no doubt many of the other artists



Figure 4. The Car of Flora. The Illustrated News, 25 June 1853.

traveling on the *Washington* were fresh from the service of William Batty. Their embarkation at Southampton on 30 March closely coincided with the termination of Batty's management of Astley's: barely four weeks after his retirement they arrived in New York.

As to the Henri Franconi after whom the New York Hippodrome was named, we may be certain he was the same who had appeared in London the two previous years. Aside from the lustre that attached to his name, his experience and supervisory position at the London Hippodrome, together with his own demonstrated skill as an equestrian, made him a natural choice to direct the New York venture. As already noted, he had also been active at his cousin's Paris Hippodrome during the seasons of 1845-48 and had served as veterinary to the President of the Republic in 1851. On a recent visit to the British Museum I was able to fill another gap in his history upon the discovery of two bills dating from late 1848 and the spring of 1849 for the *Theatre du Cirque, Gymnase Equestre* of Bastien Franconi.¹⁵ In one of these bills, that for his benefit on 11 April 1849, Henri is announced to ride his Arabian horse Johnster and, later in the program, following an exhibition of haute école by Laurent Franconi, to exhibit his jumping horse Bayard. Both of these animals were still with him in 1853, with the latter in particular eliciting the admiration of New York and, previously, London spectators. There still remains, of course, the problem of linking the Henri who visited these shores with the Henri Narcisse Franconi born in 1818. Were it not for the age given in the ship passenger list (discovered through an unfortunate excess of zeal), I would have no hesitation in making the connection. Perhaps the age reported was the result of some misunderstanding on the part of the person charged with keeping the ship's records. Or perhaps Franconi deliberately misstated his age. Whatever the reason, there is no doubt in my mind that the Henri who appeared at the New York Hippodrome was a bona fide representative of the Franconi Family — and very little doubt that he was Henri Narcisse.

NOTES

¹Description based on the *Illustrated News* (19 March and 14 May 1853); *Daily Times* (25 March 1853); *Spirit of the Times* (7 May 1853); *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion* (18 June 1853); *Francis's New Guide to the Cities of New York and Brooklyn* (1854), p. 83.

²*New York Herald*, 18 April 1853.

³*Gleason's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion*, 18 June 1853.

⁴*Illustrated News*, 21 May 1853.

⁵Thomas Allston Brown, *A History of the New York Stage* (New York, 1903), II, 21.

⁶George C. D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage* (New York, 1927-49), VI, 411-412, 423.

⁷Several of the dates which I have given in this chart will be found to differ slightly from those reported in other sources. Readers interested in learning more about the Franconi Family and their genealogy are referred to Tristan Remy's carefully researched article, "La 'Dynastie' des Franconi," published in *Le Cirque dans l'Univers*, No. 76 (1 er trimestre 1970), pp. 3-7.

⁸Advertisement in the *London Times*, 1 May 1851.

⁹See the advertisement in the *Times* for 16 June and the brief notice in the issue of 28 June.

¹⁰See the advertisements in the *Times* for 19 August, 1 and 15 September, and 11 October 1851.

¹¹Thomas Frost, *Circus Life and Circus Celebrities* (London, 1875), pp. 142-143; cf. the advertisement in the *Times* for 24 May 1852.

¹²Advertisement for Astley's in the *Times* for 2 August; act reviewed in the issue of 28 August.

¹³See the advertisements in the *Times* for the week of 6 September 1852.

¹⁴With an unusual act of his own, apparently, for in March 1853 I find him billed to perform at Drury Lane Theatre as the "American Air Walker." For Sands' antipodal experiment (i.e., ceiling-walking) at the Bowery Amphitheatre the previous December, see Brown, *History of the New York Stage*, I, 237.

¹⁵Theatrical Cuttings 50. Bastien Franconi — in reality the equestrian Bastien Gillet (1805-90) — appropriated the family name upon marrying one of Jean Gerard Henri Franconi's daughters.

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CIRCUS TRAIN WRECK NEAR CITY
One Dies, Five Hurt;
Wild Beasts Jolted

Little Falls Daily Transcript

CIRCUS TRAIN WRECKED NEAR CITY

Few American institutions can match the ability of the circus to cope with adversity and disaster. "Acts of God" such as fires and floods have pressed the management of various circuses to prove resourcefulness that allowed the show to go on, with little or no performances lost.

A facet of circus history that has captured the interest of historians is the recording of a large number of circus train wrecks. Few major circuses have escaped railroad mishaps and curiously enough, wrecks have often occurred in cycles, much as accidents have come in threes in the circus.

Circus historians A. Morton Smith and Charlie Campbell have made a study of circus rail mishaps. Stuart Thayer's ONE SHEET coverage of the Great Wallace Shows 1903 wreck prompted this pictorial review of a number of big top rail catastrophies. In checking past published lists of circus train wrecks discrepancies crop up, a check of route discloses that a show was not in the territory of the accident scene during the seasons sometimes enumerated in past lists. Complete research has not been made by this author, and in no

way will this article attempt to record all of the wrecks in circus history. But we will touch on details of some, and provide photographic evidence of others.

One very early collision involved the advance advertising car of the Barnum & London show on August 29, 1877. This accident occurred in Altoona, Iowa, with six men being killed and six injured.

The following year the Sells Bros. Great European 7 Elephant Railroad Show suffered two wrecks of its 34 car train. The route book relates that on May 1, 1878 at Birmingham, Pa., the train in passing the depot struck the end of it, causing three cages to fall off a flat car. The rhinoceros den in falling burst open and let loose his majesty, the rhinoceros. He was startled, but soon took off down the track. He was soon captured and placed in a car for safe keeping until his cage was repaired. The elephant cars jumped the track after leaving Caldwell, Ohio, on September 12, no problems with the elephants, but one bull man sprained his ankle.

The S. H. Barrett Shows, number two of the Sells Brothers, found the early part of the 1884

season to be plagued with rail accidents. The show met with rail mishaps in Harrodsburg, Ky., on April 10, Abington, Va., April 19, Williamsburg, Ky., on April 30, Bardstown, Ky., May 3 and in Stuart, Iowa on July 2.

In 1885 the Barnum & London Show had a wreck on July 3 in Bangor, Maine. The route book reported that a wheel broke on a flat car tossing the calliope and an organ wagon from the train. That same year twelve people were injured and \$50,000 damage was done to the Adam Forepaugh Show in a crash in Edgerville, Iowa on August 14. The same season of 1885 the John Robinson Show was in a wreck on October 4 at Ames Station, Minn.

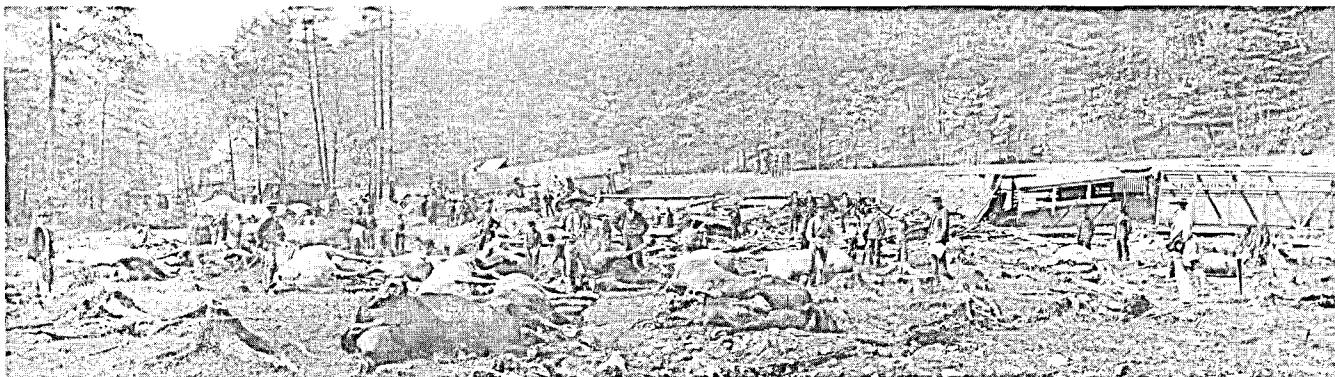
The John Robinson Circus was involved in two serious rail mishaps on successive days in 1887. On November 4, in St. Louis, Mo. two people were killed and six cars wrecked. The following day in Brazil, Ind. four coaches were wrecked and several persons were injured. The damage in the two collisions came to \$200,000. The Robinson show was in a wreck in Corwin, Ohio on September 10, 1888.

A wreck that was well documented by photographs occurred on Friday, August 23, 1889, in Pottstown, N.Y., while the Barnum & Bailey show was enroute from Gouverneur, N.Y., to Montreal, Quebec. According to the route book the first day of the Montreal stand was missed. Several of the stock cars were derailed with a loss of 31 performing horses. Eleven men were in the horse cars at the time, but none were hurt.

On July 16, 1886 the Frank A. Robbins Circus was loaded and ready to move out of Putnam, Conn. when a car jumped the track and took several others with it. One hossler was caught under a car and lost both legs and then bled to death. The band chariot was demolished as was a cage full of monkeys. John Willy, the dead man, was buried in Putnam when no relatives could be reached. All

This view shows the stock cars of the Sells Bros. Circus derailed during the season of 1889. All photos from Pfening Collection.





animals except the elephants remained in Putnam 24 hours while repairs were made to the four damaged flat cars.

On the same July 16, 1886 the Adam Forepaugh Show had a wreck that killed 18 horses and injured several people in Augusta, Maine.

The performance of the Barnum & Bailey show was delayed in Marshalltown, Iowa, on August 31, 1888, when a disarranged switch threw three flat cars of the fourth section off the track. The cage containing the lions was thrown upside down, but the animals were contained. The hippo cage was jammed against a freight car and five other cages were slightly damaged. In three hours the wreck had been cleared, though it was necessary for the four cars to follow later.

The 1892 route book of the Ringling Bros. World's Greatest Shows lists May 17, as Black Tuesday. The show played Beloit, Kansas, the day before and was on the way to Washington, Kansas, for the May 17th stand. One mile east of Concordia, at 1:45 A.M. a crash awoke train section No. 1. Pouring into the night the show people found a chaos of wrecked cars, some crushed to kindling, others in a lake of rushing waters, on each side of the track. The water had undermined a trestle and the train. The lake was full of dead and drowning horses. Twenty-six draught horses floated dead, others had broken legs and had to be killed. A half dozen men were crushed or hurt internally. Two sleepers escaped destruction, while the engine stood with its cow catcher facing the dark sky.

A railroad track inspector had found the culvert and trestle undermined and unsafe, but instead of returning one mile to Concordia he went four miles ahead to Rice Station, where he telegraphed back, just missing the first section, and barely in time to stop the second section from crashing into the first.

The show quickly had a handbill printed advertising for 50 draft horses. A number of horses were purchased locally and a car load more were brought from Chicago, where John Ringling was at the time. A total of forty horses were lost. The lot in Concordia was on a high hill and fearing winds and additional trouble the show side walled the big top. Admission price was reduced to 25c. On Friday, May 20, while in Marion, Kansas, the hippo cage rolled down in a ditch and the hippo escaped and roamed the Kansas prairie for a short while.

Eight days before the close of the season the Ringling show had another wreck in 1892 on the way out of Columbia, Missouri. A flat was derailed and six cages were demolished. The

The famous Walter L. Main Circus wreck of May 30, 1892 is pictured with dead animals and equipment spread over the ground.

route book does not mention the wreck, however gives a hint about it with a word of praise to William H. Fay, the master of transportation.

The Adam Forepaugh & Sells Bros. Circus route book of 1898 tells of a train derailment in Moberly, Missouri, on September 20. A flat car and a sleeper were left for repairs. A number of years earlier, in August of 1882 the Sells Brothers train was descending a grade enroute from Richmond to London, Kentucky, when the second section crashed into the first. Three people were killed, a number were injured. A large carved bandwagon was destroyed in the wreck.

The wreck of the Walter L. Main Circus in Tyrone, Pa., on May 30, 1892, is among the best known in circus history. The show had played in Houtzdale, Pa., and the seventeen car train was speeding along when the elephant car went off the track and was followed quickly by the rest of the train. All of the flats and stock cars were derailed, leaving only the three sleepers and the caboose on the track. Five men were killed and eleven others hurt. A total of 39 horses and ponies were lost. Owner Main always believed that the wreck was caused by the show's elephants Jennie and Lizzie, shifting their weight while the train was rounding a curve on a down grade.

While in Europe the Greatest Show on Earth

Horses lost in the August 23, 1889 Barnum & Bailey Potstown, N.Y. wreck are shown here.

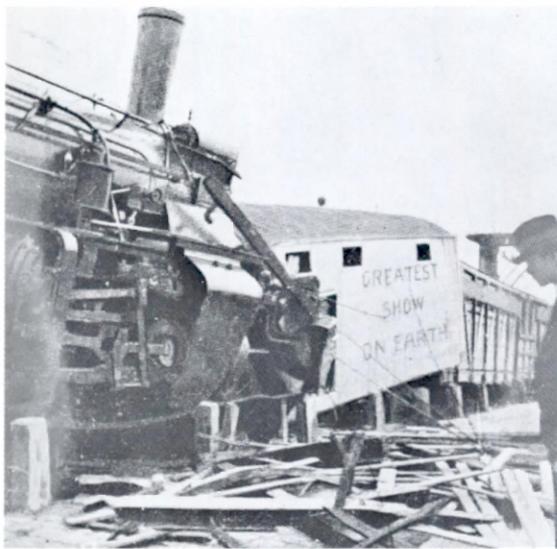
suffered a crash of one section of the train into another. It was on July 6, 1901, in Beuthen, Germany, where the stock cars of the second section had been cut away from the rest of the train prior to unloading. The stock cars containing racing and performing horses, ponies, and baggage stock. A few flat cars were also attached. The third section came into the yards at a speed of 30 to 40 miles an hour, and with the switch not being changed it crashed into the stock cars with terrific force, cutting the pony car in two in the center. Two men died from the crash, as did two performing stallions, one race horse, two baggage horses and five ponies. Seven men were injured in the 2:00 A.M. collision. The show was not delayed however that day. The German railway furnished a number of cars to take the place of those destroyed or damaged in the accident.

In 1902 the John H. Sparks Famous Shows lost two cages when two flat cars were derailed in Veedersburg, Indiana on September 1.

That same season the Sells-Downs United Shows was enroute from Oklahoma City, Okla. to South McAllister on September 20, 1902. The train had stopped in Choctaw where the crew was awaiting orders in the wee hours of the morning. Out of the dark came a freight train. The engineer started to throw the reverse but the long train slid into the show train, telescoping the rear sleeping cars. There was nothing in the way of emergency equipment at the depot and it was necessary for the show working men to get into the stake and chain wagon to get sledges to clear the injured from the sleeper. Two men were killed and scores were injured.

In the last issue of BANDWAGON Stuart Thayer wrote about the serious wreck of the





This is a view of the Barnum & Bailey wreck in Beuthen, Germany, on July 6, 1901.

Great Wallace Show in Durand, Michigan, on August 6, 1903.

Actually this was the second train crash of the season for that show. On July 16, 1903, in Shelbyville, Illinois, three cars were demolished with a loss of two men killed, four injured and loss of four horses.

Twenty-one circus people were killed in the Durand crash, as well as three officials of the Grand Trunk Railroad. The first section of the Wallace show train had stopped in Durand for water, when the second section piled into the sleepers at the end of the first train. The three railroad employees were riding in the caboose, and were killed. The last sleeper just ahead of the caboose was the "bosses car." There were 21 bosses and assistant bosses in the car and all were killed except Bob Amrams, the boss hostler. He too was badly mangled, but did survive and returned to the show in later seasons.

The Barnum & Bailey show, on its first tour of America following five years in Europe was playing in nearby Wisconsin on August 6,

The first wreck of the Carl Hagenbeck Wild Animal Shows is pictured in Gonzales, Texas in early October of 1906.



The John H. Sparks Famous Shows wreck of September 1, 1902 is shown with wagons and equipment all over the ground.

1903. James A. Bailey, owner of the Bailey show sent a number of his assistant bosses to Durand to help the Wallace show. After a lay off of four days, and with the help from the Barnum show people, the Great Wallace circus picked up its route. The railroad was clearly to blame and the engineer of the second section was tried and convicted of criminal carelessness and was sent to jail. For a number of years following the crash the Grand Trunk Line refused to haul any circus people on its rails.

On August 23, 1903, less than a week following the Wallace wreck, the John Robinson Ten Big Shows was moving towards Shenandoah, Iowa, following the August 22 stand in Glasgow, Missouri. Early in the morning of the 23, the third section was delayed by a drawbar being pulled out. At 4:50 A.M. in Brunswick, a switch was left open and the show train ran at near full speed on the siding, colliding with a freight train, jarring the full third section, and wrecking the pony car, killing seven ponies and injuring four of the pony boys. The show proceeded and opened on time in Gallatin, Missouri on the 25th. A photo in the 1903 Robinson route book shows the pony car telescoped into an engine.

In 1906 the Norris & Rowe show lost six seals and 15 wagons when five flat cars were derailed on July 1 in Saskatoon, Sask. In early October of 1906 the Carl Hagenbeck Show was

in a wreck in Gonzales, Texas. Shortly thereafter on October 25 on the way to Hot Springs, Arkansas, the show was in another wreck in Tiger Creek, Arkansas. In this crash three flat cars and 16 wagons were destroyed. The show closed shortly on November 7 following a four day stand in New Orleans. On November 10, 1906, Cole Bros. Circus had a wreck in Ashburn, Georgia, with five cars lost.

The season of 1910 was a bad one for the Campbell Bros. Circus. The show train was in three wrecks that year. The first one was in Oregon River, Oregon on June 16. The BILLBOARD of August 27, 1910, tells of the second one, exactly 30 days later on August 16 in Sparta, Wisconsin, on the way into Portage. The show train was pulling out when it was struck by a passenger train at 4:00 A.M. Three stock cars were demolished. One car containing five elephants and eight camels was completely wrecked and destroyed by fire. Two elephants had to be killed. Seven or eight

This view taken on August 16, 1910, shows the wreck of the Campbell Bros. Circus, and two elephants killed in the crash.



other cars were in a heap, mixed up with dead animals and debris, and later partially consumed by fire. All together two elephants, six camels, two horses were lost and others were injured. One man was killed and six others seriously injured. On December 9 four flat cars were derailed, but no one was hurt in a wreck in Goliad, Texas.

The Yankee Robinson Show was in a wreck in Merriland Junction, Wisconsin, on June 9, 1911, one sleeper was demolished and another damaged.

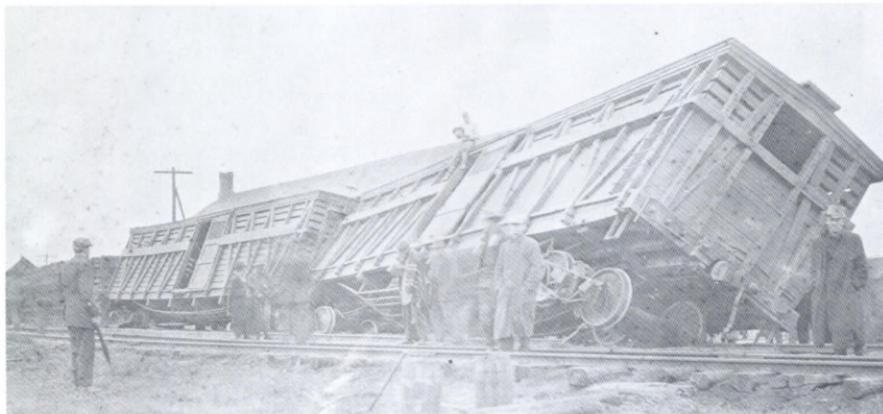
In 1913 the Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West train was in a wreck on June 24, in East Sumerhill, Mass., with three men being hurt. The Barnum & Bailey Circus train was in a collision on August 12, 1913 in Richfield,



The Kit Carson Wild West wreck of April 9, 1912 is pictured, with a good view of wooden flats.

stand in Hammond. The first section had left on time and was proceeding to Hammond. The second section carried at its end four coaches in which performers, ticket sellers, ushers and various other show employees were sleeping. Because a hot box developed the train was pulled onto a siding as it reached Ivanhoe, shortly before 4:00 A.M.

The railroad took all precautions, including block signals, and red fuses. However an empty troop train engineer failed to notice the repeated warnings and plowed full speed into the four sleepers containing 260 show people. The four cars became a mass of twisted



In 1912 the Miller & Arlington 101 Ranch Wild West was in this wreck on August 10 in Leslie, Wisconsin.

Nebr., twenty-seven people were injured in this one, with five seriously hurt.

The Sells-Floto Circus train was in a crash on September 16, 1915, in Haversville, Kansas. This wreck will be fully covered in an upcoming BANDWAGON article on that show.

It was on June 22, 1918 that the circus was struck with the worst rail disaster in the history of the white tops. The Hagenbeck-Wallace show had played in Michigan City, Indiana, on June 21, and was on the way to the June 22



A Yankee Robinson Show stock car is shown derailed in 1913.

wreckage of steel, splintered wood, cinders and mangled bodies. When crews began digging through the wreckage they were aghast at the extend of loss of life and the injuries. The train consisted of 14 flat cars at the front of the train followed by the four sleepers and a caboose. The sleeper and their contents took the brunt of the crash. Fire companies from Hammond and Gary were dispatched to the scene but water soon became scarce, preventing their extinguishing the flames. The intense heat drove the rescuers back, preventing them from reaching those still alive in the wreckage. Tank wagons were brought up and water from the tender cars was quickly used. The word of the



Destruction of a Sells-Floto flat car is pictured during the September 15, 1915 wreck of that show.



The July 20, 1930 wreck of the Al G. Barnes show forced that show off the road for a week to rebuild.

disaster spread quickly and crowds of people came to the scene, bringing of all things pickpockets.

By late afternoon the last body was removed, that of a 16 year old boy. In all 86 individuals were lost in the wreck, and over 175 others were injured. The show missed the Hammond stand as well as the June 24 stand in Monroe, Wisconsin. The route was picked up in Beloit on June 25.

The Hagenbeck Wallace show later had wrecks on July 11, 1922 and November 11, 1924. The 1924 wreck was in Longview, Texas, and two sleepers were lost.

On May 11, 1926 the Heritage Bros. Circus was in a wreck in Weirton Junction, West Virginia, on the way to Toronto, Ohio. Several cars were derailed and two flat cars were badly damaged.

Early on the morning of July 20, 1930, the Al G. Barnes Circus train was passing Canaan Station, about fourteen miles north of Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada, when nine cars left the rails. Five flat cars carried the light plant, stake driver and other baggage wagons. The other four cars were sleepers. Four men were killed and 18 injured. Seventeen of the twenty-nine cars of the train had passed the point of the derailment of the remaining nine cars.

The show stayed in Moncton for a week while repairs were made to the rail equipment and a number of new wagons were built along with the repairs of others. One show was given in Moncton on the night of July 22. The performance was given at the fairgrounds, with electricity from the city, since the light plant was demolished in the wreck.

The Cole Bros. Circus played St. Cloud, Minn., on July 26, 1945. While there a new wheel was put on one of the cars, the work being done by the Great Northern shops. It was this new wheel that caused a wreck of the Cole show train at Belle Prairie, Minn., just five miles north of Little Falls and about 30 miles from Brainerd, the July 27 stand.

Five flat cars were piled one on top another, badly damaging a number of wagons. Two men were injured. A show official estimated the loss at around \$53,000. System flats were pressed into service following some repairs made in Brainerd. A number of wagons were built enroute, and could be spotted later in the season by the different lettering of the title.

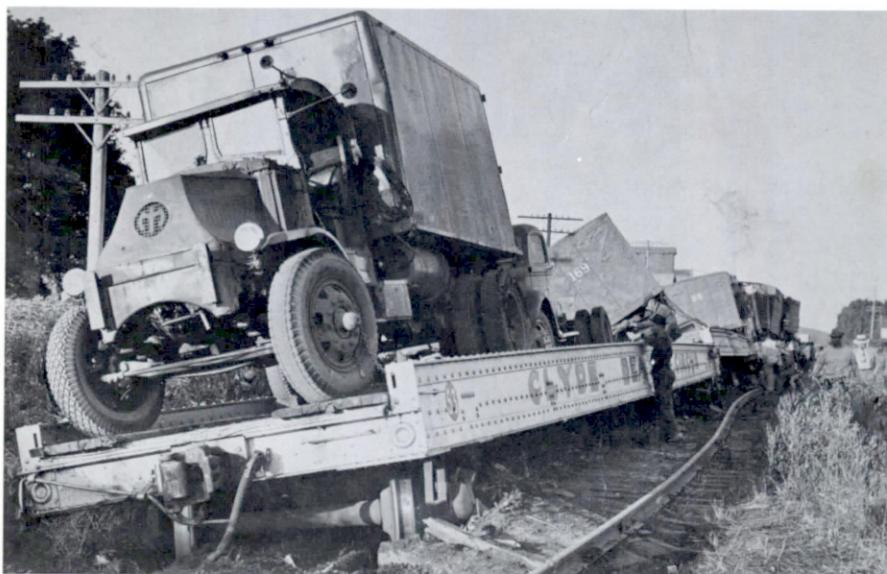
The last circus wreck of note occurred to the Clyde Beatty Circus on July 8, 1947. The show was enroute from Sioux City, Iowa, to Norfolk, Nebraska, when 8 cars of the 15 car train were derailed. One man was killed and six were injured. Four days were lost, while making repairs.

In each of the wrecks that have been recorded in circus history none has kept the show from going on. The losses of men, equipment and money were great, but each show mastered all problems and moved on.

The Clyde Beatty Circus lost four days in rebuilding and repairing after this wreck in Hubbard, Nebr., on July 8, 1947.



The tangled wagons and rail cars of Cole Bros. Circus are shown during the July 27, 1945 wreck.



ONE SHEET

By Stuart Thayer

The contribution the circus business has made to the American version of the English language is not as great as one would suppose considering how very popular the institution once was in the culture. The reason for this may well lie in the fact that the people who used the "language" of the circus, the words that were necessary to operate shows, were a separate and rather isolated group in the society. Because of this there was little opportunity for their vocabulary to pass into the language.

By contrast, popular language today is filled with words derivative of such entertainment fields as motion pictures, television and the advertising business. This is because the public is constantly being assailed by this language. Too, we need these words at this point in time in order to communicate with each other about these very images which are being forced upon us, whereas nineteenth century Americans had no need for language conveying circus terms.

Today the words, "circus", "three ring circus", "center ring", "big top", "wild west show", "Barnum and Bailey" and "Jumbo" all seem to be common currency. Also, the names of types of acts seen in a circus are part of the language; most people would understand "juggler", "wire walker", "trapeze performer", etc. Of course, many such words pre-date the circus.

A term that came into and left the language in the nineteenth century is "seeing the elephant." "Have you seen the elephant?", was a question, "I am going to see the elephant", the declarative statement. This came from the fascination the beast had - and has - in circus and menagerie exhibition. It came to be a phrase denoting an ultimate experience. A man might say, "Boys, I have seen the elephant," and go on to describe some exciting or unusual event that he had recently observed.

In the Civil War the phrase came to mean combat experience, the ultimate happening in a soldier's life. "I have seen the elephant," meant that the speaker had been in battle.

The expression seems to have died with that war generation; a friend of the writer's heard her grandfather use the terms as recently as 1948.

Another circus phrase that became part of the language is, "I wish

I was in Dixie." This story begins with the name of a New York slaveholder, one Dix or Dixie, who had to move his slaves from Manhattan (or possibly Staten Island) because of abolitionist sentiment. Once in the South local mores demanded that he treat his slaves as did his neighbors, which was much less leniently than he had in New York. This caused his slaves to long for the good old days in "Dixie's Land", which was their term for their former home. This language came to be that for any better place, be it Beulah Land or any earthly paradise. Gradually, the word Dixie came to mean the southern United States in a positive sense to both blacks and whites and from that became a cognomen for the region.

Since circuses often spent their winters on the road in the south it was not long before the phrase, "I wish I was in Dixie," was known to and used by circus people. However, it was used in the nature of a plaintive expression in time of stress or unpleasantness; bad weather, a muddy lot or a difficult task as examples.

During World War II a phrase of similar utility among soldiers in the United States Army was, "It's a beautiful day in Chicago." This expression also came from the entertainment business, being the common opening line of the Don McNeil breakfast radio program.

"I wish I was in Dixie," became part of the common language through the vehicle of the song, "Dixie," written by an ex-circus man, Daniel Decatur Emmet (1815-1904).

Emmet, composer of several well known songs of the time of which "old Dan Tucker" is probably best remembered today, was a member of Bryant's Minstrels in 1859. He was asked to write a new song to be used in the "walk-around", the closing portion of minstrel shows in which the entire cast participated.

He attempted this in a New York hotel room on a rainy night. The gloomy weather brought to his mind the circus phrase "I wish I was in Dixie," and thus inspired he composed his best-remembered work. It was sung publicly for the first time September 19, 1859 at 472 Broadway. In the spring of 1861 it was introduced in the South at a performance of the burlesque, "Pocahontas," at the New Orleans Varieties Theatre. The last scene of the variety show featured a zouave march led by Susan Dening singing "Dixie". She received seven curtain calls requesting the song and its popularity in the South had begun. On April 30, 1862 the Natchez Courier printed a song, "Dixie," by Albert Pike, who had changed Emmet's words from sectional chauvinism to a battle cry for the Southern cause in the Civil War and it is this song we are familiar with today. "For Dixie's Land We Take Our Stand, To Live or Die For Dixie!" (Sources: Photographic History of the Civil War, 11 volumes, Vol. X (New York 1911); The Reader's Encyclopedia by William Rose Benet, (New York, 1948).

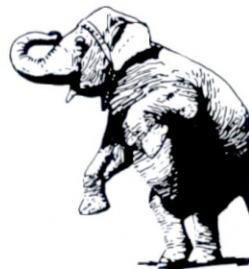


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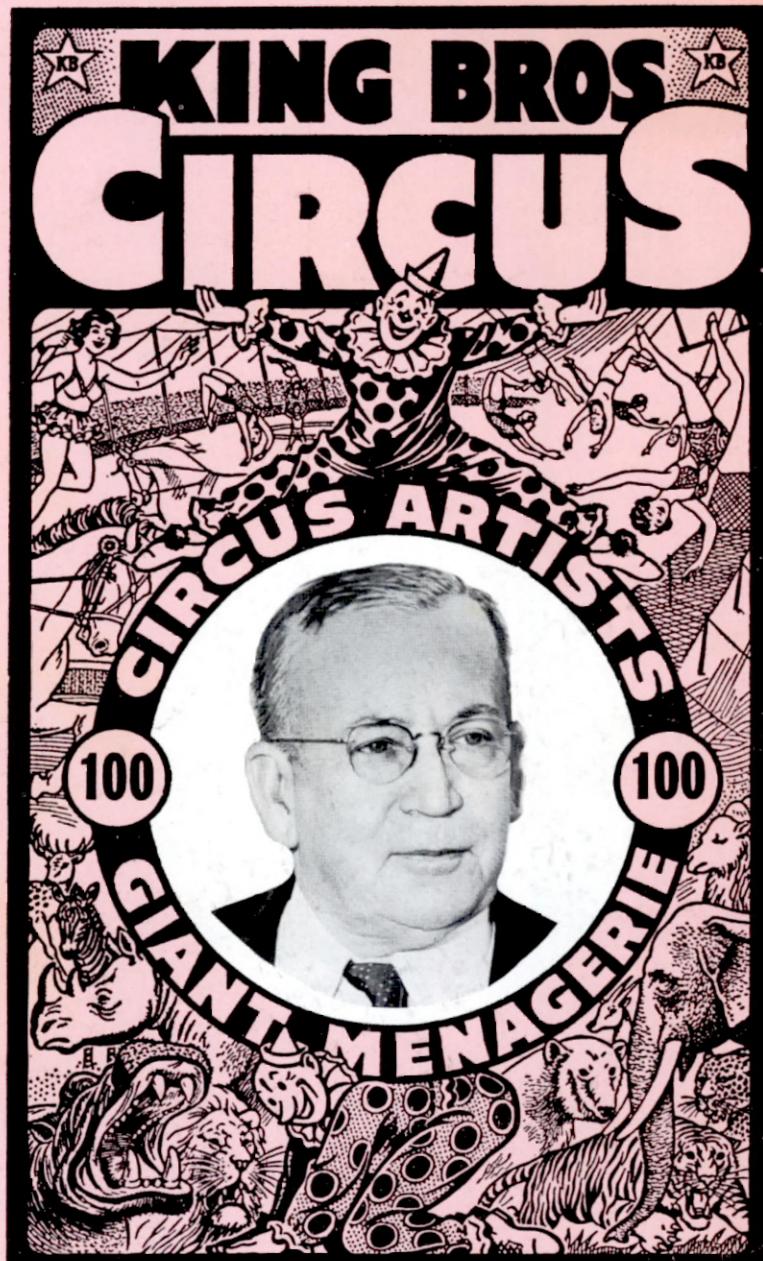
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